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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Oppn is using Army as a weapon: Modi

'Can reveal sins of 7 generations of Oppn'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Vivekananda Rock Memorial, in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

HOSHIARPUR, 30 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asked the Opposition to make no mistake in understanding him as he can disclose "sins of their seven generations". This marked the end of his Lok Sabha campaign with another onslaught on rivals in an election marked by acrimony from both sides.

Modi's fierce attacks and sharp words, which have drawn outrage from critics and backing from BJP's supporters, have been a running highlight of his campaign and it was no different in his last rally of the seven-phase elections.

Highlighting his government's efforts to modernise the Army and make it the most capable and self-reliant, Modi accused INDIA leaders of using the armed forces as a political weapon. The armed forces are raised to be battle-ready and not for parade, he said.

He hit back at them for criticising the 'Agnipath', a programme for short-term recruitment into the armed forces, and seeking to gain's voters' support with its promise to scrap the measure.

"I want to tell INDI Alliance leaders. I am silent but you should not make a mistake in understanding Modi... 'Modi jis din muh kholega to tumhari saat pidhi ke paap nikaal ke rakh dunga' (The day Modi opens his mouth, he will bring out the sins of your seven generations)," he said.

"You abuse Modi as much you want but Modi will not tolerate this insult to my country's armed forces," he went on to say.

Targeting AAP, which runs the government in Punjab, he compared it to an infant who "stole" the nurse's ring the moment he was born.

It turned out that the infant's father was a big thief, he said, and linked the AAP to the Congress saying the latter has given birth to corruption in the country.

"It took the Congress 60 years to do a PhD in corruption but they (AAP) are born corrupt," he said. *—PTI*

Modi begins 45 hours meditation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his 45-hour-long meditation at the famed Vivekananda Rock Memorial. Modi worshipped at the Bhagavathi Amman temple and reached the rock memorial by a ferry service.

'Modi has turned jawan into mazdoor'

Rahul says INDIA bloc will scrap Agniveer

BALASORE, 30 MAY

Alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has turned "jawans" into "mazdoor" through the Agniveer scheme, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said BJP insulted the people of Odisha after one of its leaders recently claimed that Lord Jagannath is a devotee of Modi.

Addressing an election rally at Simulia in Bhadrak Lok Sabha seat, he vowed to save the Constitution and democracy and announced that the INDIA bloc government would legalise MSP on foodgrains, waive farm loans and scrap the Agniveer scheme.

He said all jawans will get pension, canteen facilities and the dignity of "shaheed" in case of their death.

Alleging that BJD works in partnership with BJP, Gandhi said he has been fighting against the saffron party for which the Centre has filed 24 defamation and criminal cases against him.

"The ED questioned me for 50 hours, BJP snatched my Lok Sabha membership and even took away my official residence. If Naveen Babu is actually fighting against BJP, why there is no such case," Gandhi asked.

"In Telangana, there was an alliance between BRS and BJP. Congress fought against both parties and broke their backbone," Gandhi said.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Khatkar Kalan near Jalandhar on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

- Alleging that BJD works in partnership with BJP, Gandhi said he has been fighting against the saffron party for which the Centre has filed 24 defamation and criminal cases against him. He said BJP government has waived Rs 16 lakh-crore of 'arbapatis' and the Congress will waive the loans of farmers.

"Crores of rupees is being provided to poor people and women are travelling in buses for free. We are going to replicate it in Odisha. We want to oust the BJD-BJP partnership," he said.

He said BJP government has waived Rs 16 lakh-crore of 'arbapatis' and the Congress will waive the loans of farmers.

"After INDIA bloc forms the government, it will introduce Mahalaxmi Yojana and other schemes for farmers, unemployed youths and others. We will have legal provisions of giving MSP on foodgrains to farmers," he said, adding that wages of MGNREGA workers will be enhanced to Rs 400 from Rs 250. *—PTI*

Early monsoon sets in over Kerala and northeast

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Spurred by cyclone Remal, the southwest monsoon set in over the Kerala coast and parts of the northeast on Thursday, a day earlier than forecast by the weather office. Weather scientists said the cyclone, which ripped through West Bengal and Bangladesh on Sunday, had pulled the monsoonal flow to the Bay of Bengal, which could be one of the reasons for early onset over the northeast. On 15 May, the weather office had announced the onset of monsoon over Kerala by 31 May. Kerala has been receiving heavy rains for the past few days resulting in a surplus May rainfall, the weather office data showed. The normal monsoon onset date for Kerala is 1 June and for Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur and Assam is 5 June. *—PTI*

15 die of heatstroke as heatwave bakes Bihar at 44°C

PATNA, 30 MAY

Intense heatwave conditions prevailed across Bihar on Thursday where the mercury soared past the 44 degrees Celsius mark in many places while 15 people lost their lives in the state suspected to have been caused by the scorching weather. The state disaster management department, while confirming the number of deaths, said the cause of death could not be ascertained. Buxar recorded the highest temperature of 47.1 deg Celcius. *—PTI*

150-FT DEEP GORGE

22 killed, 47 injured as bus with pilgrims falls into gorge in Jammu

JAMMU, 30 MAY

Twenty-two people were killed and 47 injured after a bus carrying pilgrims skidded off the road and rolled down into a gorge in Jammu district on Thursday, officials said.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor (LG) Manoj Sinha has expressed anguish at the loss of lives in the accident.

The accident took place at the Tungi-Morh in the Chowki Chora belt of the district, the officials said, adding that the bus rolled around 150 feet down into the gorge.

The bus was carrying devotees from Haryana's Kurukshetra and was headed towards Shiv Khori in the Pouni area of Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district. It had started its journey from Uttar Pradesh.

The bodies have been shifted to the Akhnoor sub-district hospital, the police spokesperson said, adding that of the injured, seven have been admitted in the Akhnoor hospital and 40 in the Government Medical College (GMC) hospital in Jammu.

Police near the wreckage of the bus **PHOTO: PTI**

The injured were initially shifted to the Akhnoor hospital for treatment. Subsequently, 36 of them, including six in a critical condition, were shifted to the GMC hospital in Jammu in ambulances, the officials said.

"A car was coming from the opposite direction. The driver tried to negotiate a blind curve but failed, resulting in the vehicle rolling down into the gorge," Amar Chand, one of the injured people undergoing treatment at the Akhnoor hospital, said.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Traffic, Faisal Qureshi, the transport commissioner, along with other officials, visited the spot and supervised the operation. *—PTI*

Hundreds in Hassan protest against Prajwal

HASSAN, 30 MAY

Hundreds of people took part in a march here on Thursday, seeking justice for the victims of the alleged sexual abuse by suspended JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna.

They also demand the arrest of the accused and a fair probe into the cases. The march under the banner 'Namma Nadige, Hassanada Kadega' (Our march towards Hassan), was organised by 'Naveddu Nilladiddare' (If we don't stand up), a human rights collective, and was joined by civil society groups from across the state, including women, labour, farmers, Dalit, and sexual minority. The march was held amid the beats of 'Tamate' (a percussion instrument) and drums.

Besides demanding the arrest of Prajwal, the participants also sought justice for the victims and expressed solidarity with them.

The protest march began at Hemavathi statue near Maharaja Park here and concluded by handing over a memorandum to Hassan Deputy Commissioner C Sathyabhama, following which a mega convention was held at Taluk office road, during which activists reiterated their demand. *—PTI*

MEA gives 2 June deadline to Prajwal

New Delhi, 30 May

Suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, accused of sexually assaulting multiple women, has time till 2 June to respond to a show-cause notice served by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for revocation of his passport following which action will be taken. MEA said this ahead of his return to India from Germany on 31 May.

Activists take part in a protest against JD(S) leader Prajwal Revanna in Hassan on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

SMA doesn't protect interfaith marriage: MP HC

BHOPAL, 30 MAY

Madhya Pradesh High Court observed that a marriage between a Muslim boy with a Hindu girl is not a valid marriage according to Mahomedan Law. It turned down a a plea for police protection to register an inter-faith marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

Justice Gurpal Singh Ahluwalia on Monday was dealing with a petition filed by a couple - a Hindu woman and a Muslim man.

Justice Ahluwalia said the marriage between a Muslim man and a Hindu woman would be deemed as an "irregular" marriage under Muslim law even if they are married under the Special Marriage Act, according to a Bar and Bench report.

A relationship between the two was opposed by the family of the woman. The Court noted that neither the woman nor the man wished to convert to another religion for the marriage. The woman would continue following the Hindu religion, while the man would continue following Islam after their marriage, their counsel said. The counsel also that the inter-religious marriage, though prohibited under personal law, would be valid under the Special Marriage Act. Special Marriage Act would override the personal law, he said. The Court opined that although a marriage under the Special Marriage Act cannot be challenged for the non-performance of religious rituals, such a marriage would not be a legal marriage if it is prohibited under the personal law.

AFTER 4 FAILED ATTEMPTS

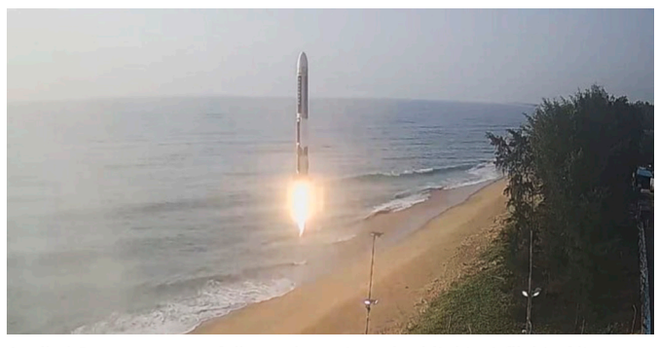
Agnikul fires world's 1st 3D-printed rocket

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Chennai-based space start-up Agnikul Cosmos on Thursday successfully carried out a sub-orbital test-flight of its home-built 3D-printed semi-cryogenic rocket -- Agnibaan -- from its own launch pad at Sriharikota, making it India's second private entity to do so.

After four unsuccessful attempts, the test flight of Agnibaan Sub-Orbital Technology Demonstrator (SOrTeD) on Thursday took place at 7.15am without any live streaming and in the presence of fewer dignitaries at the Sriharikota launch pad located within ISRO's Satish Dhawan Space Centre.

"Humbled to announce the successful completion of our first flight - Mission 01 of Agnibaan SOrTeD - from our own and India's first and only private Launchpad within SDSC-SHAR at Sriharikota," Agnikul Cosmos said on X.



Agnikul Cosmos successfully carries out a suborbital test-flight of its 3D-printed rocket Agnibaan at Sriharikota on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

"The vehicle was completely designed in-house and was powered by the world's first single piece 3D printed engine and also happens to be India's first flight with a semi-cryo engine," the start-up said.

Agnikul is looking at flying an orbital mission towards the end of the financial year of 2025.

ISRO Chairman S Somanath said, "The success involving many firsts including 3D printed semi-cryogenic engine, flight control systems etc. demonstrate the prowess of indigenous design and innovation. It motivates ISRO to support the Space startups and Non-governmental entities for innovation and Atmanirbharata to create a vibrant space ecosystem in the country."

This was the fifth attempt by Agnikul to launch the Agnibaan SOrTeD since 22 March The Agnikul team consists of over 200 engineers and is associated with NCCRD at IIT Madras and is also guided by 45 former scientists from ISRO. The SOrTeD mission is a single-stage launch vehicle demonstration that will be powered by a semi-cryogenic engine, the Agnilet, a sub-cooled liquid oxygen-based propulsion system developed indigenously.

The start-up has readied the vehicle with the first-ever ethernet-based avionics architecture and fully in-house developed autopilot software from India. *—PTI*

CYCLONE REMAL TRIGGERS FLASH FLOODS IN MANIPUR

IMPHAL, 30 MAY

Continuous rainfall triggered by cyclone Remal has caused flooding across multiple districts in Manipur, prompting the state government to initiate active rescue and relief operations, an official said.

In view of severe flooding caused by breaches in embankments along river banks, the government on Thursday declared a two-day public holiday for all state offices until 31 May. Citizens have been urged to stay indoors unless faced with an emergency, according to a government directive.

"Departments responsible for rescue, relief, and essential services, such as home, police, relief and disaster management, power, health and family welfare, district administration, and water resources, will continue to operate, it added.

Meanwhile, rescue operations of stranded people continued in badly-hit areas of Imphal East and Imphal West districts.

At least 42,000 hit in Assam

The flood situation in Assam's eight districts remained grim with the water level of major rivers rising and inundating vast tracts of land on Thursday. Over 42,000 people have been affected in Nagaon, Karimganj, Hailakandi, West Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong, they said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: SALAR

MM Hills temple gets ₹2.58cr in 1 month

C'NAGAR, 30 MAY

The iconic Sri Male Mahadeshwara Hills in Hanur taluk received a hundi collection of Rs 2.58 crore over a 30-day period, according to Raghu, Secretary of Hill Development Authority. The hands were opened in the presence of Shanta Mallikarjuna Swamy, President of Saluru Brihan Mutt, near the bus stand. The counting process was conducted under CC camera surveillance. This period saw a significant number of parents and students visiting due to the summer vacation. The collection included Rs 2,58,44,097 in cash, 93 grams of gold, and 3.35 kg of silver. The hundi contained foreign currency notes from Saudi Arabia, Japan, Nepal, and Qatar, along with 25 uncirculated Rs 2000 notes.

—Salar News

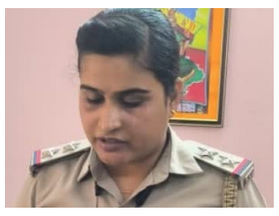


PHOTO: SALAR

Police officer caught taking bribe in Mysuru

MYSURU, 30 MAY

The Lokayukta police arrested a woman sub-inspector while taking a bribe in a sting operation in Mysuru, according to a press release from Mysuru Lokayukta Superintendent VJ Sajeet. Sub-inspector Radha of Kuvempunagar police station was apprehended while taking Rs 50,000 from a civil contractor named Mahesh. The operation was based on a complaint filed by Mahesh at the Mysuru Lokayukta station on 13 May. In his complaint, Mahesh alleged that Radha had seized his gold jewellery, property documents, bank passbook, locker key, car, and other assets in connection with a case registered at Kuvempunagar police station. Radha had allegedly demanded Rs 2 lakh in return for the items.

—Salar News

Incentive rumours: 1,456 open GPO accounts in 1 day

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Despite repeated clarifications from authorities, post offices across Bengaluru continue to witness a surge in women opening India Post Payment Bank accounts. 1,456 women opened new accounts on Thursday compared to 786 on Wednesday. The rush stems from a rumour that the government will deposit Rs 8,500 monthly into these accounts if it secures power at the Centre. Speaking to Salar News, KR Lakshmi Narayana, the Public Relations Inspector of General Post Office (GPO), said, "We have displayed posters and we keep informing everyone that this is not a real scheme."

—Salar News

Fire breaks out in Bommasandra factory, none hurt

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

A fire ripped through Technova Tapes (India) Private Limited factory in Bengaluru's Bommasandra Industrial Area on Thursday, causing damages worth millions of rupees to equipment and materials. Fire and Emergency Services Department received the alert at 11am and dispatched four fire tenders to the scene. The fire was brought under control in a few hours and no casualties were reported, according to fire department reports. Officials are investigating the cause of the blaze. The fire originated in the cotton box and tape manufacturing section of the factory.

—Salar News

The Long and Short of Bengaluru underworld

SALAR EXCLUSIVE

DANIEL GEORGE
BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Gone are the days of wielding 'Long' (a knife) in gang fights among rowdies in the underworld in Bengaluru; the latest entrant being a new shorter variant of Long called 'Half Bat'.

Long has a length of 22.8cm and Half Bat is 17cm long; both weigh around 2kg. Half Bat has a shorter grip than Long and it is easier for attackers to carry them on their waist. Half Bat was allegedly used in the recent six murders that happened in the City where rowdies were hacked to death by delivering blows on the head.

Speaking to **Salar News**, young rowdies from the City who did not wish to be named said: "The latest trend is to use Half Bat and rain a lethal blow on the head, stunning the opponent and finishing him off within seconds. Earlier, the Long was used by boys in the 'field' (rowdyism). There was every possibility of the opponent grabbing Long due to its length and regaining lost ground, but in Half Bat, the grip is firmer for the 'batsman' and the blow is a sure shot 'wicket'.

Those who use Half Bat and tools (weapons) in a fight to kill someone are called 'batsmen' and those who keep an eye on the surroundings and survey the vicinity where the potential victim is present are called 'fielders' or 'fielding'. The method in which the boys or foot soldiers go around in cars and two-wheelers to look for their victim at his house and his other usual hangouts is called 'Rounds'. Once the killing of the rowdy is successful it is termed as a 'wicket'.

These weapons are manufactured in Hoskote, around 25km from Bengaluru. Rowdy elements get the weapons from there according to their specifications, sources said. None in the Capital City would manufacture these weapons as they fear a police backlash. Earlier billhooks used to be sourced from Karaikudi in Tamil Nadu but after a police crackdown there, it is in short supply in Bengaluru.

Long made its foray into the Bengaluru underworld on 25 January 1977, when notorious rowdy Thigalarpete Gopi was attacked on the premises of a court by former don MP Jayaraj and his henchmen; however, Gopi survived the attack. After this incident, Long served as the most favoured weapon of rowdies and underworld elements to finish off each other till around a year ago when a large number of rowdies met their gory end in bars, clubs, hotels, on the streets and roads of Bengaluru.

—Salar News

How the Long came under Arms Act

Long came under Arms Act after a woman brandished the weapon at a construction site in Bengaluru. Former assistant commissioner of police and member of the anti-rowdy squad of Bengaluru Police Lava Kumar was working as a consultant in that construction company after his retirement when the incident happened. "The woman was trying to threaten us openly brandishing a Long and I filed a complaint with police. The chargesheet was filed and the case went up to Karnataka High Court, however, the court quashed the case as Long did not come under the provisions of Arms Act," Kumar told Salar News. Kumar then met former City police commissioner and present CBI Director Praveen Sood. He submitted a report about how dangerous the weapon was and how youngsters were roaming around the City wreaking havoc with the Long. Later, Sood took up the matter with the State government and a notification was issued on 28 August 2017 banning the Long and other similar weapons and bringing them under the Arms Act.

Valmiki Corp scam: CM faces BJP anger

BJP workers protested against govt official's suicide, want Welfare Minister to quit

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

State BJP workers tried to lay siege to the residence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the City on Thursday, demanding the resignation of Tribe Welfare Minister B Nagendra.

They were protesting against the suicide of Chandrasekaran P, the Superintendent of the Karnataka Maharishi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation (KMVSTDC).

According to the police, BJP ST Morcha workers demanded that Nagendra should resign over the alleged misappropriation of Rs 187 crore in the KMVSTDC. Tension prevailed as the police detained the BJP workers from entering the Chief Minister's residence.

The workers raised slogans against Congress, and dubbed it as anti-Dalit. They were frisked to police vans and taken away.

Later speaking to reporters Home Minister G Parameshwara said that an investigation has been ordered into the suicide. "It is said that money was transferred from the main account to other branches, and from there, it went to four other accounts. Until the investigation is completed, we can't draw any conclusions," he said.

Parameshwara said, "It was claimed yesterday that Rs 187 crore was transferred, with Rs 93 crore distributed to individual accounts. Others claim it was Rs 83 crore. There should be evidence to prove the inister's offence."

"In some cases, such notes are found immediately; sometimes they are found later. There is evidence that some these notes are written after the deaths occur. In this context, the note will be probed. Only then will the investigation proceed," he added.

—Salar News

Police detained BJP workers from entering the Chief Minister's home **PHOTO: SALAR**

Vijayendra asks govt to sack Nagendra

Shivamogga/ Bengaluru, 30 May

State BJP President BY Vijayendra on Thursday demanded the sacking of Scheduled Tribes Welfare Minister B Nagendra. He asked the State government to hand over the case of an alleged illegal money transfer case to the CBI. He said that suspending two or three officials was not enough and the minister's resignation was needed without any delay. *—PTI*

6 Union Bank officials booked in corp scam

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

A case has been registered against six officials of the Union Bank of India for fraudulently diverting Rs 94.73 crore of the State Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribe Development Corporation Ltd to various other bank accounts, police said on Thursday.

The action comes after an official of the Corporation died by suicide on Sunday, leaving behind a note in which he named the Managing Director JG Padmanabh, Accounts Officer Parashuram G Durugannavar and Union Bank of India Chief Manager Suchismita Rawal in the note.

In the complaint filed on 28 May, A Rajashekar, the General Manager of the Corporation has alleged "severe fraudulent activities" involving the top management of Union Bank of India, MG Road branch here and other third parties, which have caused "substantial financial and reputational damage" to the organisation.

He said on February 19, the Corporation transferred its account from Vasanthnagar branch to MG Road branch of the national bank.

"A total of Rs 187.33 crore was transferred from various banks and the State Huzur Treasury Khajane-II to our savings Bank account at Union Bank of India, MG Road Branch," he said.

Citing the model code of conduct, the corporation did not communicate with the bank. Consequently, the bank failed to send the new passbook and chequebook to our registered address, he said in the complaint. *—PTI*

Nagawara Metro uses box-pushing tech

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) has achieved a major feat in Indian metro construction by using a new technique for the first time in the country. BMRCL utilised box-pushing technology to construct a 77m tunnel section beneath the Outer Ring Road (ORR) flyover.

As part of Namma Metro's Pink Line project, the tunnel under the Nagawara flyover will link with the upcoming Nagawara interchange metro station.

"Traditionally, Namma Metro has relied on circular underground routes," said Shrivas Rajagopalan, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of BMRCL, to Salar News. "However, the presence of numerous utilities and the need to avoid traffic disruptions on the crucial ORR junction prompted BMRCL to adopt the innovative box-pushing method."

This technique involved prefabricating eight concrete boxes and then pushing them into place beneath the Nagawara flyover using hydraulic jacks. The entire process, completed on the south side of the upcoming Nagawara station, took nearly six months. The box-pushing method involves creating a horizontal underground opening by pushing precast concrete box units through embankments or hard rock to create tunnels.

The Pink Line project consists of a 2km tunnel network from Dairy Circle to Nagawara.

To raise more revenue, BMRCL will allow advertisements on the exteriors of its trains for the first time. Tenders will be floated soon for the ad space, but the windows will not be covered to avoid affecting aesthetics.

Bengaluru Metro's first driverless train is ready for the next stage of testing. After completing stationary tests, the train will now undergo signaling system integration tests starting June 7. This is a crucial step for launching commercial operations on the Yellow Line (RV Road-Bommasandra) by December as planned. *—Salar News*

The tunnel will link with the upcoming Nagawara interchange metro station **PHOTO: SALAR**

NOT A SIGH OF RELIEF

Monsoon woes: City sees rise in dengue cases

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

The arrival of monsoon rains in Bengaluru has brought both relief from the heat and a surge in dengue fever cases.

According to the Bruhat Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), the City is seeing 13 new dengue cases daily. From May 16 to 28 May alone, 184 cases were reported, a 39 per cent increase from the same period last year.

This trend is concerning, with 1,308 cases recorded so far in 2024 compared to 583 in 2023 for the same period.

Suralkar Vikas Kishore, Special Commissioner for Health at BBMP, assured residents that measures are being taken to control the spread. These include routine checks by volunteers, identifying and eliminating mosquito breeding sites, and educating residents about proper water management.

PHOTO: PTI

Dengue is spreading rapidly due to stagnant water in flower pots, broken tyres, and water tanks, which are ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

To combat this, BBMP has deployed teams in each ward to identify and destroy larvae breeding sites. In water-scarce areas, efforts are being made to educate residents on the importance of properly covering water collection containers.

Public awareness campaigns are a crucial part of the fight against dengue. The BBMP is conducting ward-level drives, using loudspeakers on garbage trucks, and distributing leaflets.

The highest number of cases are concentrated in the East, South, and Mahadevapura zones, likely due to poor hygiene and waste disposal practices.

Medical professionals emphasise the importance of eliminating stagnant water to prevent mosquito breeding. Residents are advised to properly cover water containers, discard old tires, and empty flower pots.

—Salar News

50 fall ill after eating prasadam in Chikkodi

BELAGAVI, 30 MAY

An incident took place in Kerur village of Chikkodi taluk, Belagavi district, where at least 50 people fell ill after consuming prasadam at the Balumama fair. Out of those affected, 30 people have been admitted to Chikkodi government hospital, 10 to the Anganwadi in Kerur, and another 10 to the Yaksamba government hospital.

Thousands of people consumed prasadam on Wednesday at the fair, and symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea began appearing after the evening meal. It is reported that more than 200 people unknowingly consumed the leftover food the following afternoon.A medical team has been deployed in the village as a precautionary measure. In another incident, on 22 May, 46 devotees fell ill, with five in critical condition.

—Salar News

Min promises to upgrade govt residential schools

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Buoyed by the tremendous performance of students of the Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS) run schools in class 10 board examination, the State government has vowed to upgrade these schools on par with the sophisticated private schools.

Established to impart quality education to the economically and socially backward communities, these schools hogged the limelight on 9 May when the SSLC results were out and Ankita Basappa Konnur of the Morarji Desai Residential School at Mudhol in Bagalkot district emerged as a topper by securing 625 out of 625 marks. Ankita is the only student to get cent per cent marks in all subjects this year.

She belongs to a humble background as her father Basappa Konnur is a farmer and her mother is a homemaker. "As part of the continuation of this magnanimous performance of social welfare department schools, I have decided to make sure that all our government schools are upgraded on par with the most sophisticated ones," state Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa said.

—PTI

DKS claims black magic against him and CM

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday claimed that a ritual named "Shatru Bhairavi Yaga", which involves the sacrifice of animals, is being performed at a temple in Kerala, targeting him, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Without revealing any names, he alleged that some political people in Karnataka were getting it done and aghoris (monastic order of ascetic Shaivite sadhus) were also consulted. Asked if he believes in such yagas and rituals, he said, "It is based on one's belief...let them do any experiment against me, there is a Shakti in which I believe in, it will save me." Shatru Bhairavi Yaga is being performed near Rajarajeshwari temple in Kerala for Shatru Samhara (destruction of enemies). For this yaga 'Pancha Bali' (five kinds of sacrifice) is being given...21 goats, three buffaloes, 21 black sheeps, five pigs.... Aghoris are being approached. It is going on," he added. *—PTI*

Situation in Bishkek remains normal: MEA

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The situation in Bishkek remains normal, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday, days after violent mobs targeted foreigners in the Kyrgyz capital triggering concerns over Indian students there. At present, about 17,000 Indian students are studying in Kyrgyz Republic and most of them are in Bishkek. "The situation in Bishkek remains normal. Over two weeks ago, some incidents involving foreign students from other countries had happened which concerned our students," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "Our Embassy immediately got in touch with Indian students to ensure their safety and welfare. They opened 24x7 helplines to assist them," he said. Jaiswal's remarks came in response on the issue at his media briefing. *—PTI*

SP leader Azam Khan gets 10 yrs in 2016 eviction case

RAMPUR, 30 MAY

A court here on Thursday sentenced Samajwadi Party leader Mohammad Azam Khan to 10 years of imprisonment in an eight-year-old case of forcibly vacating a house and beating the owner. The punishment was pronounced by the Special MP/MLA Court, which also imposed a fine of Rs 14 lakh on the SP leader. The court had on Wednesday found Khan guilty in the case of forcefully evacuating, looting and demolishing a house in Dungarpur. Senior prosecution officer Shiv Prakash Pandey and prosecution officer Rakesh Kumar Morya said the case was registered by plaintiff Abrar in Thana Ganj.*—PTI*

Chargesheet filed against TMC's Shahjahan Sheikh

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday said it has filed its first chargesheet against suspended West Bengal TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh, his brother and two alleged accomplices as part of a money laundering case investigation. The others named in the prosecution complaint are Sk Alomgir (Shajahan's brother) apart from Shib Prasad Hazra and Didar Boksh Molla. The chargesheet has been filed before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act court in Kolkata. The CBI too had filed its chargesheet against Sheikh and some others this week. Sheikh, the ED alleged in a statement, had "created a criminal empire revolving around land grabbing, illegal fish farming/trading, grabbing brick fields, cartelisation of contracts, collection of illegal taxes/levies, commission on land deals etc." Sheikh was arrested by the ED on 30 March in connection with a case of mob assault on the agency's officials when they went to search his premises in Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas on 5 January. *—PTI*

HC junks plea to disqualify PM from contesting polls

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed a petition seeking disqualification of Prime Minister Narendra Modi from contesting the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, saying the allegations levelled are "reckless" and "unsubstantiated". Justice Sachin Datta said the petition was tainted with malafide and oblique motives and such averments in a petition cannot be entertained. The petition by captain Deepak Kumar alleged that Modi and his accomplices attempted to destabilise national security by planning a fatal crash of an Air India flight in 2018 which the petitioner commanded as a pilot. "Perusal of the petition reveals that the same is replete with vague, unsubstantiated and reckless allegations. Not only are the pleadings inchoate but the tenor of the same is demonstrative of the fact that the petition is tainted with malafide and oblique motives," the high court said, adding that the petition is totally absurd. *—PTI*

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal during a roadshow in Punjab; West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with Mohua Moitra during a roadshow in Kolkata *PHOTO: PTI*

DONE & DUSTED: LS poll campaigning ends

57 seats will vote across 8 states and UT

VARANASI/ CHANDIGARH, 30 MAY

The high-pitched campaigning for the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections in 57 seats in seven states and the Union territory of Chandigarh on 1 June ended Thursday evening.

Polling is scheduled in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three seats in Jharkhand besides Chandigarh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term from Varanasi.

The campaigning saw BJP leaders led by Modi accusing Congress and INDIA alliance of being corrupt, anti-Hindu and engaging in loot, appeasement and dynastic politics. Opposition parties have been claiming that BJP is anti-farmer, anti-youth and will change and scrap the Constitution if they win the elections.

In Odisha, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge also claimed that BJP leaders were trying to project Modi as the "eleventh avatar" of Lord Vishnu but the people of the country will not accept. On Thursday, former prime minister Manmohan Singh accused Modi of lowering the dignity of public discourse and the gravity of the office of the prime minister by giving "hateful speeches" during the poll campaign.

In Punjab, where ruling AAP and its INDIA partner Congress are fighting separately in a multi-cornered contest, the high-decibel campaign saw the participation of senior BJP leaders from Modi to Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and Nirmala Sitharaman to BJP chief JP Nadda and chief ministers of BJP-ruled states.

For Congress, Kharge and party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra led the campaign. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, out on interim bail in the excise policy case, also led an aggressive campaign for his party candidates along with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. Modi while addressing a rally at Hoshiarpur in Punjab, attacked the Congress for "ranting" about the Constitution when it was the one that "strangled" it during the Emergency and not care about it when Sikhs were killed in the 1984 riots. In West Bengal, Modi and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee took out a rally in Kolkata. *—PTI*

'VICIOUS HATE SPEECHES'

Modi lowers PMO's dignity: Manmohan

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

In a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former prime minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday accused him of lowering the dignity of public discourse and the gravity of the office of the Prime Minister by giving "hateful speeches" during the poll campaign.

In an appeal to voters of Punjab ahead of the seventh-phase of Lok Sabha polls on 1 June, Singh asserted that only the Congress can ensure growth-oriented progressive future where democracy and Constitution will be safeguarded. The senior Congress leader also hit out at BJP for imposing an "ill-conceived" Agniveer scheme on the armed forces. "BJP thinks that the value of patriotism, bravery and service is only four years. This shows their fake nationalism," he said in a letter to voters of Punjab.

Singh said, "I have been keenly following the political discourse during this election campaign. Modi ji has indulged in the most vicious form of hate speeches. No Prime Minister in the past has uttered such hateful, unparliamentary and coarse terms, meant to target either a specific section of the society or the Opposition." *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

INDIA to pick PM face within 48 hours: Ramesh

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The INDIA bloc will get a "decisive mandate" in the Lok Sabha polls and may take even less than 48 hours to decide on its Prime Ministerial pick, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said on Thursday, asserting that it stands to reason that the party which gets the maximum seats in the alliance will be a "natural claimant" for its leadership.

In an interview with PTI on the last day of campaigning for the seventh-phase Lok Sabha polls, the Congress general secretary exuded confidence that the INDIA bloc will get seats "well above" the 272-mark needed for a majority in the Lower House.

Ramesh also said that when the INDIA 'janbandhan' parties will get the people's mandate, then some NDA parties may join the coalition and Congress high command will have to decide whether to include them in the alliance or not.

Asked whether post-polls doors will remain open for NDA allies such as JD(U) Chief Nitish Kumar and TDP President N Chandrababu Naidu, he said, "Nitish Kumar is the master of 'palti (volteface)'. *—PTI*

'PM spoke on Hindu-Muslim, divisive issues 421 times'

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

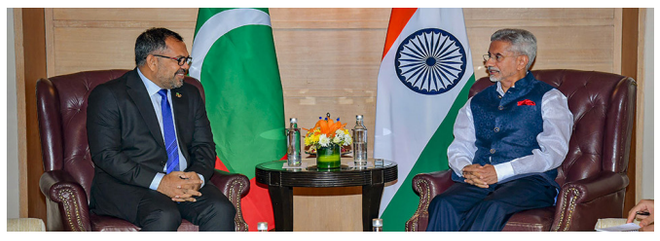
Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that he spoke about 'mandir-masjid' and divisive issues 421 times during poll campaigning despite the Election Commission's direction of no appeal for votes on caste and religion.

Addressing a press conference on the last day of campaigning for the seventh and last phase of the Lok Sabha elections, he also said Modi in his speeches of the last 15 days took the Congress's name 232 times, his own name 758 times. He didn't talk about unemployment even once, Kharge said.

The INDIA bloc will form government with a clear majority and it will give the country an inclusive, nationalistic government, he said.

"We are confident that people will give a mandate for an alternative government on June 4," the Congress chief said.

People have endorsed "our view that if this government gets another chance, it will be end of democracy", he said. *—PTI*



Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer with EAM S Jaishankar *PHOTO: PTI*

No proposal made to Maldives for FTA: India

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

India on Thursday said it has not made any proposal to the Maldives for a bilateral free trade agreement (DTA) and that it was ready to consider if the island nation expresses interest for such a pact.

"No specific proposal for a bilateral FTA with the Maldives has been made by the Government of India," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"If the Government of Maldives expresses interest in having an FTA with India, we will give it due consideration," he said. Jaiswal's comments came in response to a question at his weekly media briefing. Last week, Maldivian Minister for Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed indicated that India has initiated efforts to have an FTA between the two countries.

"They (India) want there to be a Free Trade Agreement with Maldives, in addition to SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement)," Saeed told a press conference in Male. *—PTI*

PROBE ON

Tharoor's ex aide detained in gold smuggling case

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Customs authorities have detained a former member of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor's staff and another person at the IGI airport here in an alleged case of gold smuggling.

In a statement, the Customs said that on the basis of suspicion, its officers have booked a case of gold smuggling against an Indian national who arrived here from Bangkok on Wednesday.

It said further investigations revealed involvement of another individual, who had come to the airport to receive the passenger and also assist in the alleged smuggling.

The said the individual was intercepted and a heavy gold chain weighing 500 gm, valued at Rs 35.22 lakh, was recovered from him. The gold was handed over to him by the passenger inside the arrival hall, the customs said. Enquiry revealed that the individual had a valid Aerodrome Entry Permit. The circumstances of acquisition of Aerodrome Entry Permit by the receiver, as a part of the protocol team for a Member of Parliament, are being looked into, the the customs said.

Shashi Tharoor *PHOTO: PTI*

The recovered gold has been seized under section 110 of the Customs Act, 1962 and further investigation is underway, the statement said. Tharoor, who is in Dharamshala for campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls, said he was shocked to hear of the incident involving "a former member" of his staff who has been rendering part-time service to him in terms of airport facilitation.

"He is a 72-year-old retiree undergoing frequent dialysis and was retained on a part-time basis on compassionate grounds. "I do not condone any alleged wrongdoing and fully support the authorities in their efforts to take any necessary action as may be required to investigate the matter," Tharoor wrote on X. *—PTI*

Complaint filed against PM over Mahatma remarks

GUWAHATI, 30 MAY

National Award-winning filmmaker Luit Kumar Barman has filed a police complaint against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his controversial comments on Mahatma Gandhi. Barman filed the complaint on Wednesday night at Hatigaon police station in Guwahati, alleging that Modi made a "highly derogatory statement" about the Father of the Nation. The police said a preliminary investigation is on and no FIR was registered yet in this connection. Modi in a TV interview to a TV channel said, "... Across the worl[20:44, 30/05/2024] Saptarshi Salar: National Award-winning filmmaker Luit Kumar Barman has filed a police complaint against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his controversial comments on Mahatma Gandhi. *—PTI*

Jagan celebrates 5 years of YSRCP govt

AMARAVATI, 30 MAY

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday commemorated five years of the YSRCP government and exuded confidence that his party would form the government again. Reddy was sworn in as chief minister on 30 May, 2019. "Exactly five years ago on this day, our party (YSRCP) came to power by god's grace and people's historic judgment.

YS Jagan *PHOTO: X/@YSR*

Irrespective of caste, religion, region and political affiliation, it did good to every family," Reddy said in a post on X.

Exuding confidence that the YSRCP would form the government again with the "people's blessings" in 2024, he vowed that the same good governance will be continued. Further, Reddy highlighted that more initiatives will be taken for the comprehensive development of the state. In 2019, YSRCP won a landslide victory, winning 151 assembly seats while relegating rival TDP to 23 seats and the Janasena to just one. *—PTI*

IN HP TEMPLE

BJP workers sing 'political bhajans'; booked

SHIMLA, 30 MAY

The police on Thursday registered an FIR against BJP office bearers for singing "political bhajans" on premises of Maa Shoolini temple in Himachal's Solan district.

The FIR was registered against BJP state vice president Rashmi Dhar Sood, Deputy Mayor of Solan Municipal Corporation Meera Anand and others. The complainant Poonam Bansal alleged that the BJP women activists came to the temple and started 'Bhajan and Kirtan' in the name of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the famous Shoolini temple on Wednesday evening.

FIR was lodged under sections 188, 505(3), 34 and sections of the Religious Institution Act 1988, police said. Condemning the incident, Solan district Congress president, Shiv Kumar said that the BJP was converting the temples into a den of politics. The Election Commission have taken notice of it, and action will follow. Linking religion with faith is correct but BJP is mingling it with politics, he added. *—PTI*

112 of 507 LS candidates in WB have criminal cases: Study

KOLKATA, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

Of the 507 candidates from West Bengal contesting in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, 112 have declared criminal cases against them, according to a study of affidavits submitted to the Election Commission (EC). The study, conducted by the West Bengal Election Watch and Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), revealed that among these 112 candidates - 97 men and 15 women - 92 have serious criminal cases against them.

"BJP's Barrackpore candidate Arjun Singh tops the list of candidates with the maximum number of criminal cases," the study said. Singh has 93 cases, followed by senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh, contesting from Burdwan-Durgapur, with 27 cases.

Other candidates with numerous cases include Santanu Thakur (Bangaon) with 23 cases, Locket Chatterjee (Hooghly) with 22, and BJP's West Bengal president Sukanta Majumdar, contesting from Balurghat seat, with 16. The analysis also found that 128, out of the 507 candidates, have assets worth more than Rs 1 crore.

The ruling TMC has the highest number of crorepati candidates with 35, followed by the BJP with 29, CPI(M) with 11, Congress with 10, and SUCI(C) with 3. Additionally, there are 17 Independent candidates and 23 other contestants who are also crorepatis. *—PTI*

CONSTITUENCY WATCH

Ansari's death a major factor in Ghazipur

GHAZIPUR, 30 MAY

Two months after his death, mafia don-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari is at the centre of political discourse in this Uttar Pradesh constituency with his younger brother and INDIA bloc candidate Afzal Ansari fighting BJP's Parasnath Rai to retain the Lok Sabha seat.

As campaigning winds to a close and Ghazipur gets ready to vote on 1 June in the last round of the seven-phase election, discussions seem to veer around the "sympathy factor" versus the "end of goonda raj" sentiment.

"This time, there is a lot of sympathy among the people due to Mukhtar death. Mukhtar's son Umar is also seeking votes for Afzal and this is increasing the sympathy,'' said 50-year-old Hidayatullah.

Two months after his death, mafia don-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari is at the centre of political discourse in Uttar Pradesh *PHOTO: PTI*

Ashok Lal Srivastava, an advocate by profession, disagreed. ''If anyone says there is any sympathy for Mukhtar, he is lying. The terror and dominance he had earlier has ended now. Its effect will be seen on 4 June (counting day).''

In 2019, Afzal defeated then Union minister and now Jammu and Kashmir lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha by more than 1.19 lakh votes.

There are 10 candidates in the fray, including Afzal Ansari, who is contesting on the SP symbol, his main rival BJP's Rai and BSP's Umesh Singh.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath have addressed rallies in favour of the BJP candidate, while Samajwadi Party Chief Akhilesh Yadav has held a meeting in support of Afzal.

Five-time MLA and two-time MP Afzal, who has been contesting elections under the shadow of Mukhtar Ansari for nearly four decades, is playing on the sympathy card.

He has been claiming that his elder brother's death is part of a conspiracy and the public is angry, the effect of which will be seen on 4 June. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PIXABAY

3 killed as heap of firecrackers explode in Puri

PURI, 30 MAY

At least three people, including a minor, died and 32 others were injured after a stockpile of firecrackers exploded during Lord Jagannath's Chandan Jatra festival in Odisha's Puri, police said on Thursday. Hundreds of people had gathered on the banks of Narendra Pushkarinee, a water body, to witness the rituals when the accident happened on Wednesday night, a senior officer said."One boy succumbed to his injuries at SCB Medical College in Cuttack and two others died while undergoing treatment in private hospitals in Bhubaneswar," he said. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday morning visited a private hospital here to meet the injured people. *—PTI*

J'khand: Bodies of 3 children found in pond

BOKARO, 30 MAY

Bodies of three children, aged between eight and nine years, were recovered from a pond in Jharkhand's Bokaro district on Thursday, police said. The three children from Sadmakala panchayat, around 120km from Jharkhand's capital Ranchi, went missing while playing on Wednesday afternoon. The family members told police that the children were playing in front of their houses around 2 pm. "After some time, when we started searching for the children, all three of them were found missing," they told police. Peterwar police station in-charge Krishna Kumar Kushwaha said that the family members informed police about missing children on Wednesday night. Police suspect that the three children went to take a bath in the pond while playing. *—PTI*

Youth killed after luxury car hits bike in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, 30 MAY

A youth was killed and two others injured when a luxury car hit their motorcycle at the Lohgarh light point in Punjab's Zirakpur, police said on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Uttar Pradesh native Sahib, aged around 19 years, they said. Police said the incident took place on Zirakpur-Patiala highway on Tuesday night when a BMW car, being driven by a Mohali resident, hit the motorcycle.Due to the impact of the collision, the youths were thrown into the air and the motorcycle hit a stationary truck, they said. "The car driver was arrested and later granted bail," Zirakpur SHO Jaskanwal Singh Sekhon said. *—PTI*

Fake currency notes worth ₹25 L seized in Nagpur

NAGPUR, 30 MAY

Police have arrested four people after recovering fake currency notes with a total face value of Rs 25 lakh in Nagpur, an official said on Thursday. The arrests and seizure were made on Wednesday by the Sitabuldi police on the complaint of one Rahul Vasudev Thakur,31,.Thakur told the police that he came across on Monday night an advertisement on Facebook offering a "quick-buck" scheme. They would give him Rs 8 lakh against Rs 2 lakh under their scheme. He also claimed to have printing machines for currency notes, the official said. Suspecting something was wrong, Thakur alerted cops, who laid a trap and arrested Satish Dhnyandev Gaikwad,29, Gautam Raju Bhalavi ,21, Shubham Sahdev Pradhan,27, and Monu, alias Shabbir Balakat Sheikh,27, with fake notes worthRs 25 lakh packed in 44 bundles, he said. *—PTI*

HC to R'than: Compensate families killed in heatwaves

HC called heat and cold waves 'national calamities'

JAIPUR, 30 MAY

The Rajasthan High Court on Thursday directed the state government to provide compensation to the dependents of people who died due to heatwave, and said there was a need to declare heatwaves and cold waves "national calamities".

Taking suo motu cognisance regarding environment protection and climate change, the High Court directed the Chief Secretary of Rajasthan to constitute committees of various departments to take immediate and appropriate steps for effective implementation of 'Heat Action Plan' prepared under the Rajasthan Climate Change Project.

The state government was directed to pay suitable compensations to the dependents of those who died due to heatstroke.

The single-judge bench of Justice Anoop Kumar Dhand also directed the state authorities to sprinkle water on the roads with huge public movement, to provide cooling spaces, shades at the traffic signals where required, all possible facilities at the health centres for treatment of heatwave patients and issue advisory for all workers who work in open including porters, cart-and-rickshaw pullers, to allow them to rest between 12 noon and 3pm during extreme heatwave conditions.

The court also said that the 'Heat Action Plan' was developed in Rajasthan.

However, it has not been implemented in "letter and spirit". *—PTI*

Women cover their faces to protect themselves from the scorching heat on a hot summer day, in Jaipur on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

3 killed, thousands affected by floods in Manipur

Imphal, 30 May

As many as three people were killed while thousands were affected by floods triggered by heavy rain in Manipur's Imphal valley, officials said on Thursday.The overflowing Imphal river inundated several areas, with water entering hundreds of houses in Imphal valley, as a result, people took shelter at nearby community halls, they said.The troops of the Assam Rifles have rescued about 1,000 people from flood-affected areas in Manipur, which was badly hit by incessant rains due to the cyclone Remal.In a statement, the Assam Rifles said its troops successfully carried out rescue operation in the flood-affected areas in Imphal city and provided succour to the distraught and stranded people on Tuesday. *—PTI*

SEARCH OP STILL ON IN LANDSLIDE-HIT MIZORAM

AIZAWL, 30 MAY

One more body was recovered on Thursday, taking the toll in multiple landslides in Mizoram's Aizawl district to 28, a police officer said.

Aizawl Superintendent of Police (SP) Rahool Alwal said that the body of a non-local resident was recovered from the debris of a landslide at Hlimen on the southern outskirts of Aizawl at 11 am on Thursday.

With the new recovery, altogether, 29 bodies have been recovered so far, he said.

According to the SP, six people, including a six-month old baby, are believed to be still missing.

Although district officials and police stated the death toll to be 29 on Wednesday, they later made rectifications and said it was 29 on Wednesday and expressed apologies citing that wrong information was mistakenly given from Aibawk village, where search for two missing peeople are still underway, due to poor mobile network.

Officials said that 15 bodies have been recovered from a massive landslide at a stone quarry in Melthum area and six from Hlimen, both on the southern outskirts of Aizawl, two people died in Falkawn village about 15km from Aizawl. *—PTI*

AMID RISING HEAT

Delhi govt to move SC over Haryana not releasing water

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Delhi government will approach the Supreme Court on Thursday over Haryana not releasing the national capital's share of water, which has led to a crisis situation, Water Minister Atishi said.

Addressing a press conference here, Atishi said Delhi is staring at an "emergency situation" and announced a slew of emergency measures to tackle the crisis.

"We will approach the Supreme Court on Thursday itself over Haryana not releasing the share of Delhi's water," she added.

The minister said a central water tanker control room is being set up in the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and it will be monitored by an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer.

"There will be a central command and control room and people will have to call 1916 if they need a water tanker. This central command and control room will inform the water tanker control room about the call. From 5 June, ADM and SDM-level officers will be deployed at the 11 water zones in Delhi. They will assess the situation at the hotspots facing a water shortage and deploy water tankers at those places," she said.

AAP leader Atishi **PHOTO: PTI**

"There will be 200 enforcement teams under an IAS officer to check water wastage and issue challans. From Friday, there will be a ban on the use of potable water at construction sites and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi will carry out an inspection and take action if these sites are found flouting the ban.

"Similarly, the government is imposing a ban on the use of drinking water for washing cars and at car-service centres. Teams from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee will be inspecting these centres and if they are found flouting the ban, they will be sealed," Atishi said.

She requested people to use water judiciously. *—PTI*

Noida flat AC blast sparks fire; no casualty reported

NOIDA, 30 MAY

A fire broke out inside a flat in a posh high-rise society in Noida on Thursday morning apparently due to a blast in an air conditioner in the house, officials said.

There were no casualties in the incident that took place at Lotus Boulevard society in Sector 100, they said.

Chief Fire Officer Pradeep Kumar Choubey said locals and society residents alerted the fire service unit about the incident in the flat on the 10th floor of the building at 10.10am.

"The fire was triggered by a blast in the AC (air conditioner). Since the firefighting systems like sprinklers, extinguishers, hoses, were working fine, the fire did not spread out much and was contained in one room (of the flat)," Choubey said, adding that there was no loss of life or injury to any person in the episode. *—PTI*

Eight injured by lightning as heavy rains lash Kerala

T'PURAM/KOZHIKODE, 30 MAY

Eight people were injured after being struck by lightning at Kozhikode beach area in Kerala on Thursday as thunderstorms with heavy rainfall and gusty winds lashed various parts of the state.

Of the injured, one person is admitted to the ICU ward of a government medical college hospital Kozhikode, an official of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) said, adding that the remaining seven are in stable condition.

Meanwhile, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert in three districts -- Alappuzha, Kottayam and Ernakulam -- of the state and yellow alert in the remaining 11.A red alert indicates heavy to extremely heavy rain of over 20cm in 24 hours, while an orange alert means very heavy rain of 11cm to 20cm, and a yellow alert means heavy rainfall between 6cm and 11cm.

The heavy rains crippled normal life in various parts of Kerala, with roads being waterlogged, water entering homes and trees being uprooted. *—PTI*

GAME ZONE FIRE

Gujarat BJP leader claims he paid ₹70,000 bribe to get fire NOC

AHMEDABAD, 30 MAY

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member from Gujarat, Ram Mokariya, has claimed that he had paid a bribe of Rs 70,000 to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Rajkot Municipal Corporation's fire department.

His statement came days after 27 people were charred to death after a massive fire gutted TRP Game Zone, a Rajkot-based recreation centre, which was allegedly being operated without any fire NOC.

Speaking to the media on Thursday Mokariya shared his "personal experience to highlight widespread corruption" in Rajkot.

The BJP leader from Rajkot also clarified that he gave the bribe to deputy fire officer BJ Theba nearly five years ago when he was just a businessman and not elected to Rajya Sabha.

Mokariya is the founder-chairman of a well-known courier company and was elected to the upper house of Parliament from Gujarat in 2021."I gave Rs 70,000 nearly five years ago to Theba to get a fire NOC for a project. I have learnt he is now being questioned by police for his alleged role in the game zone fire. I just wanted to highlight that corruption is widespread and I have made representations about it in the past too," Mokariya told reporters.

The Gujarat government has suspended seven officials, including two police inspectors, after the Rajkot game zone fire on May 25 killed 27 people, including children.

Five persons, including the owners of the game zone, have been arrested so far, while three IPS officers have been shunted out of Rajkot after the tragedy.

The Gujarat High Court on Monday came down heavily on the Rajkot civic body over the game zone fire, saying it did not have faith in the state machinery which gets into action only after innocent lives are lost. *—PTI*

27 people were charred to death in the TRP game zone fire in Rajkot, Gujarat **PHOTO: PTI**

Chota Rajan gets lifer in Jaya Shetty murder

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

A special court in Mumbai on Thursday sentenced gangster Chhota Rajan to life imprisonment in the case of murder of hotelier Jaya Shetty here in 2001.

Special judge for cases under the Maharashtra Control Of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), AM Patil, held Rajan guilty under the Indian Penal Code provisions for murder.

Jaya Shetty owned the Golden Crown Hotel at Gamdevi in central Mumbai.

Shetty was shot dead by two alleged members of Rajan's gang on the hotel's first floor on 4 May, 2001.

The court's detailed order was not yet available.

Police had registered the murder case based on a complaint filed by the hotel manager.A probe into the case indicated Shetty had received extortion calls from Hemant Pujari, a member of the Chhota Rajan gang, and was killed because of his failure to pay the money.As there have been a number of cases filed against Rajan for extortion and related offences, charges under the stringent MCOCA were also added against him and other accused in the case of the hotelier's murder.In previous two separate trials, three other accused in the murder case were convicted, and one was acquitted due to lack of evidence.Rajan, already serving life imprisonment for the murder of journalist J Dey, is currently lodged at the Tihar jail. *—PTI*

Chota Rajan **PHOTO: PTI**

- Rajan, is already serving life imprisonment for the murder of journalist J Dey killed in 2011, is currently lodged at the Tihar jail

KUPWARA: 3 LT COLS BOOKED FOR ATTEMPT TO MURDER

KUPWARA, 30 MAY

A case of attempt to murder and dacoity has been registered against three army lieutenant colonels and 13 others for their alleged involvement in a violent attack on the Kupwara police station, according to the First Information Report (FIR).

The incident on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday is said to have been triggered by the questioning of a Territorial Army jawan by the Jammu and Kashmir Police in connection with an alleged drug case.

A group of armed and uniformed personnel from the 160 Territorial Army, accompanied by senior Indian Army officials, had stormed the police station, as seen in a video.

According to the FIR, the armed group led by lieutenant colonels Ankit Sood, Rajiv Chauhan and Nikhil forcibly entered the premises of the police station. They proceeded to launch a brutal assault on police personnel present there. *—PTI*

ED attaches ₹290 cr worth assets of amusement firm

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday said it has attached properties worth over Rs 290 crore of an amusement and recreation services providing company, including in the popular GIP Mall of Noida, as part of a money laundering investigation.

The company--International Amusement Limited (holding company of International Recreation and Amusement Ltd. (IRAL)-- is accused of collecting more than Rs 400 cr from about 1,500 investors on the promise of allotment of shops/other space in Sector 29 and 52-A in Gurugram, the agency said in a statement.

However, the said entity "failed" to deliver the project and missed deadlines, it alleged, adding that monthly assured return payments to the investors were not paid.

The company "siphoned off investors' money and parked the funds with associated persons/ entities which was used for personal gains."

It alleged that back-dated agreement was executed between the promotor directors and EOD (buying entity) in order to eliminate the business advance from IRAL's balance sheet, enabling the departing directors to "evade" their responsibilities towards IRAL. *—PTI*

- The company "siphoned off investors' money and parked the funds with associated persons/ entities which was used for personal gains"

IN ASSAM

AI teacher 'Iris' makes students inquisitive

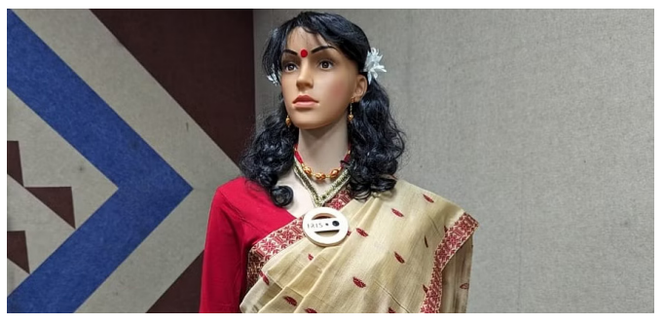
GUWAHATI, 30 MAY

Draped in a traditional 'Mekhela Chador' and jewellery, Assam's first artificially intelligent teacher 'Iris' promptly answered all questions of students of a private school here.

The humanoid listened to the question - what is haemoglobin? - and replied to the student with all the details, a teacher of the school said.

"Whether the questions were from their syllabus or about anything, 'Iris' provided answers in no time and with examples and references," said a spokesperson of the Royal Global School here.

The students were inquisitive and eagerly engaged in various activities of the robot, she said.



Assam's first AI teacher 'Iris', draped in a traditional 'Mekhela Chador'. **PHOTO: X/ @RoyalGlobal_Uni**

The children also enjoyed the robot's ability to perform gestures like handshakes, which made the learning process both fun and engaging.

'Iris' has a voice-controlled assistant which helps it respond to student queries and provides detailed explanations.

"The children are very excited because the artificially intelligent teacher has answers to their questions," the school teacher said.

The robot has been developed in collaboration with Makerlabs Edu-tech under the Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) project initiated by NITI Aayog.

'Iris' marks a significant advancement in the integration of artificial intelligence in education, the school teacher said.

The introduction of 'Iris' marks a significant milestone in enhancing the learning experience and catering to the diverse learning styles of students, she said.

The private school looks forward to leverage capabilities of the robot to personalise learning and make education more engaging for students in the northeast region, the spokesperson added. *—PTI*

FIERY & WORRISOME

Ash rising behind Sýlingarfell, as magma hits groundwater triggering phreatomagmatic activity from a volcano in Grindavik, Iceland on Wednesday. The volcano erupted on Wednesday for the fifth time since December, spewing red lava that once again threatened the coastal town of Grindavik and led to the evacuation of the popular Blue Lagoon geothermal spa *PHOTO: PTI*

Can landslides and mudslides be prevented?

Villagers search through debris from a landslide in Yambali village in Papua New Guinea; People carry an injured person is carried on a stretcher to seek medical assistance. The government has told that more than 2,000 people were believed to have been buried alive *PHOTO: PTI*

Landslides are the most common geological event. That's a fact.

They affect millions of people and cause many thousands of deaths. They often occur in countries with poor or inadequate infrastructure — such as Papua New Guinea, where a reported 2,000 people were buried alive following a landslide on 24 May — but are also reported in high-income areas, like the United States.

Thousands of landslides per year globally

In 2020, the World Bank estimated the average annual number of significant rainfall-triggered landslides between 1980 and 2018, by country.

The World Health Organization says that between 1998 and 2017, landslides affected about 4.8 million people and caused more than 18,000 deaths worldwide: "Climate change and rising temperatures are expected to trigger more landslides, especially in mountainous areas with snow and ice. As permafrost melts, rocky slopes can become more unstable resulting in a landslide."

Four main types of landslide

Landslides are classified by the way the land moves into four rough groups: falls,topples,slides and flows.

A fall involves material such as rock that falls through the air from a cliff or other steep slope. The rock may also roll or bounce as it falls.

A topple happens when, for example, a slab of rock moves forward from its base and topples toward the ground.

Slides occur when the material at the base of a slope falls due to a rupture, or what is known as a slip surface.

And flows happen when the slope material gives way and slides down like a liquid. This is usually how mudslides and rock avalanches occur.

Then it depends on the type of geologic material that moves: bedrock, debris or earth.

Debris flows, often called mudflows or mudslides, are among the most common types of landslides. Rock falls are also common.

Why do landslides happen?

Landslides happen when the materials that make up a slope fail to resist the forces acting down upon them.

That pressure can grow when there's excessive rainfall, snowmelt, changes in groundwater, earthquakes, volcanic activity or human activity.

In India, a rainfall-triggered landslide that hit during Cyclone Remal was blamed for the collapse of a quarry in Mizoram state.

And the West Coast of the United States experienced numerous landslides in the first months of 2024, destroying homes and coastlines and blocking roads in California's Big Sur region. Those were caused by extreme weather, rockfall and plain old gravity.

Can landslides and mudslides be prevented?

Yes, landslides can be prevented.

Research indicates that the simplest way to do this is to counter the very forces that cause landslides and mudslides in the first place. That can be done by improving surface and sub-surface drainage; constructing piles, buttresses and retaining walls that reinforce the base of a slope; or creating paths to divert debris.

The US Geological Survey advises against building "near steep slopes, close to mountain edges, near drainage ways, or natural erosion valleys" because quite often, human activity, including industrial and mining activity, is the main cause. The rest is nature responding.

—DW India

LETTERS Write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Extreme heat can affect mental health adversely

During heatwaves, hospital admissions for mental health spike. The past 10 years were the hottest on record, and as we prepare for another scorcher of a summer, it's time to take steps to increase our preparedness for extreme heat.

The potential for heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke are well known hazards of extreme heat. Yet, physical health is not the only factor to consider under extreme heat; mental health can also suffer. Many people can relate to the sleepless nights during hot summer months, as well as anecdotal experiences of irritation and aggression when thermally uncomfortable.

But for those living with mental illnesses, the hazard of extreme heat is more dire than temperamental responses to day-to-day disruptions. From the research in Phoenix, Ariz. and the work of others during the 2021 heat dome in British Columbia, it is known that the heat is exacerbating existing mental illnesses, increasing likelihoods of hospitalization and even death under warmer conditions for people with schizophrenia.

The interactions between environment and health are increasingly identified by researchers as public health concerns as air and water quality issues, as well as death tolls from heat, make headlines. Research has shown that lower socioeconomic groups, racialized people and the unhoused, are at greater risk of exposure to hotter conditions, while older adults are more vulnerable to hotter conditions.

The relationship between

> For those living with mental illnesses, the hazard of extreme heat is more dire than temperamental responses to day-to-day disruptions

mental illness and temperature has only recently been quantified as medical records and understanding of mental illnesses have improved.

Schizophrenia is a mental illness that disrupts transmission of information to the brain. The part of the brain most impacted also houses our thermoregulatory functions. It's the part that tells us we're too hot and to start sweating or we're too cold and should shiver to stay warm.

So those with schizophrenia aren't able to respond to extreme heat the way the general population does; their bodies aren't telling them to take precautions. Further, the medications used to address schizophrenia also raise core body temperature. This means that when taking the medication, people with schizophrenia are closer to the thresholds for heat stress and stroke than the general population.

In studying hospitalizations for schizophrenia in Phoenix (where summertime overnight low temperatures are, on average, at 30 C) between 2006 and 2014, it is found that minimum air temperature (the overnight low temperature) has a significant relationship to the number of hospitalizations for schizophrenia on that day and the following day.

Around three per cent of all schizophrenia hospitalizations during that time period can be attributed to the overnight low temperature.

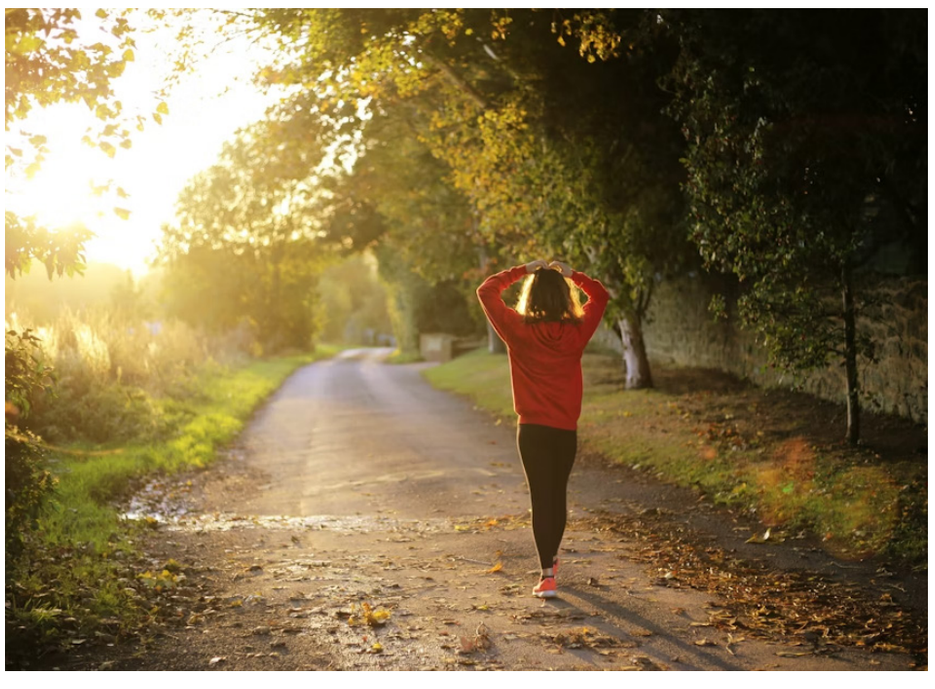
The risk is highest in both extremely cold (lower than 3 C) and extremely hot conditions (higher than 30 C). These hospitalizations cost the Phoenix health-care system over US$2 million (in 2024 USD). Certainly, Canadians see much colder conditions than 3 C at night but rarely experience overnight lows above 30 C; however, the 2021 heat dome resulted in over 600 deaths in B.C. and researchers found that schizophrenia was the chronic condition most associated with risk of death during the extreme heat.

Extreme heat can have devastating impacts on those living with mental illness, our health-care system and our communities.

While there are many different factors potentially contributing to mental illness, heat plays a pervasive role in a wide range of mental health issues.

So if climate change is continuing to bring hotter summers, what can be done to prevent these hospitalizations and deaths? There are measures that have broader benefits in addition to improving mental illness outcomes during extreme heat. Urban green space has been shown to improve mood, self-esteem and even speed up recovery from illness. So as the temperature spikes and you switch on the air conditioning and reach for the cold drinks, remember there are impacts to us all beyond just physical health, and pause to note how the heat is influencing your mood.

Courtesy, The Conversation



The interactions between environment and health are increasingly identified by researchers as public health concerns as air and water quality issues, death tolls from heat *PHOTO: UNSPLASH*

Odisha: Anti-incumbency, pro-BJP sentiments strong among migrants

Around 100,000 young women and men in Odisha's Kendrapara district work in other states or countries, mostly as plumbers, and many of them have come home to cast their vote in the simultaneous assembly and general elections on 1 June, 2024.

The migrant workers of the district known as the 'capital of plumbers' are an important vote bank for all the three major parties in the state – the ruling BJD, BJP and the Indian National Congress – as well as the independent candidates. Party members of all ranks have reached out to this populace personally to urge them to return home to vote, recognising their potential to help them clinch a majority, said Pramod Nayak from Mandapada village under Rajnagar Assembly segment.

Labourers from the district, especially plumbers, have contributed to the construction of the new parliament building and convention centre in New Delhi as well as the stadiums and other public infrastructures in Qatar ahead of the Football World Cup in 2022, among other works. "The local youth is interested in plumbing as it commands great respect and good money," said Alekha Jena, a senior BJP leader and former MLA of Rajnagar.

The plumbers contribute to creating structures to ensure proper sanitation and safe drinking water in their villages, said Jagannath Acharya of Nimapur under Pattamundai block. "The picturesque villages of plumbers have good roads and a serene and clean environment." But in their hometowns, they find it difficult to earn a living or the wages are low. "A plumber in a West Asian country earns about Rs 50,000- 1 lakh a month. In big Indian cities, too, they earn Rs 30,000 to a lakh monthly," said 60-year-old Saroj Rout of Patrapur village, a plumber who worked in Iraq for a decade.

Each year, at least 2,000 young people from this coastal district cross the sea to work in many countries in west and south Asia, said Jagajiban Das, a trade union leader from Kendrapara.

Ranjan Panda, a climate crusader popularly known as the 'water man of Odisha', said, "I met a plumber from Kendrapara district in a hotel in Washington 15 years ago."

Around 8,000 people, including many girls from the coastal pockets of the district, work in plywood and garment factories in Kerala. Male workers work in plywood units, whereas girls work in garment factories. Four years ago during the first nationwide pandemic lockdown, Bollywood actor Sonu Sood airlifted 167 girls and 22 boys from Kendrapara who were stuck in a garment factory in Kerala and help them return home. But almost all the workers returned to Kerala after the pandemic. "Now, most of them have returned to their villages to cast their votes," said Sudrashan Rout from Bagapatia village under Rajnagar Assembly segment.

Each year, at least 2,000 young people from Kendrapara district move abroad for work *PHOTO: PTI*

Amit Parida, a bus owner from Bagapatia, said many workers had booked advance tickets costing Rs 1,500 each to make the 72-hour trip from Kerala to exercise their voting right.

The demands of this politically active voter-base is, thus, important for the politicians in the fray. "We are sparing no effort to woo the migrant workers. Many BJD leaders are also in touch with migrant workers of New Delhi and other places over mobile phones," said Dhiren Sahoo, president of the district unit of BJD.

BJP is also not lagging behind to win the heart of migrant workers. "We prepared a list of migrant workers and urged many of them to return to their houses to cast their vote in the favour of BJP candidates," said Kishor Panda, a senior BJP leader and president of the district unit of the saffron party.

The major parties are also pumping money to bring home the migrants, said Debashis Sahoo a travel agent of Pattamundai, adding that there is hardly any village in Aul, Rajnagar, Mahakalapada, Patkura and Kendrapara Assembly segments within Kendrapara Lok Sabha seat without its share of migrant workers, mostly plumbers. The state government has not done anything for the welfare of the migrant workers, according to a section of the labourers who have left the state. The BJD government has failed to set up big industries in the state as a result many educated youths work in other states. This has turned them against the state government, they added.

The Baladevjew power loom in Kendrapara shut down twenty years ago and around 5,000 weavers lost their jobs, rued Manas Behera, who used to work in the power loom. Like him, many of these workers were forced to move to Surat to find a job. "The migrant weaver population will vote for BJP and Congress candidates to teach BJD a lesson."

But some initiatives by the BJD government in power has also left a mark among the migrant population, pointed out members of the party. Most of the migrant workers are plumbers in the district. Five years ago, Susant Singh, the minister for labour and employees, state insurance and rural development inaugurated the Migration Support and Resource Center (MSRC) at Kendrapara town to provide help to the plumbers and other migrant workers of the district who work in many states and countries. Moreover, in 2006, the state government established the State Institute of Plumbing and Technology (SIPT) at Pattamundai in 2006 to help the youths of the district learn more about the modern plumbing technology and compete with plumbers from other states.

"Many trained plumbers of SIPT have found employment in construction and water-sanitation companies. Most of the migrant workers will vote in favour of BJD candidates," said Dhruba Sahoo, a senior BJD leader and MLA candidate of Rajnagar.

Courtesy, DownToEarth

PHOTO: FREEPIK

President polls still scheduled for 2024: SL PM

COLOMBO, 30 MAY

Sri Lanka's government had not discussed at any point the postponement of the presidential election which will be held on schedule this year, Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena said, dismissing as "irresponsible" a controversial proposal by President Ranil Wickremesinghe's party to postpone both presidential and general elections. The island nation's Elections Commission earlier this month said the presidential election would be conducted between 17 September and 16 October.Wickremesinghe's United National Party general secretary Palitha Range Bandara presented a proposal to postpone both the presidential and general elections by two years and emphasised that if circumstances warrant, this proposal can be formally submitted to Parliament, paving the way for a referendum. *—PTI*

Black men sue US airlines for racial discrimination

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

Three black men have filed a racial discrimination lawsuit against American Airlines, alleging that the carrier briefly removed them from a flight after a complaint about body odour. The men, who were not seated together and did not know each other, say that every black man was removed from the 5 January flight from Phoenix, Arizona, to New York. "American Airlines singled us out for being Black, embarrassed us, and humiliated us," the men said in a joint statement on Wednesday. The Texas-based airline said it was investigating the matter as the allegations did not align with its values. American Airlines employees tried to re-book the men on other flights, but there were no other services to New York that night. *—BBC NEWS*

New Guinea survivors slow to move to safer side

MELBOURNE, 30 MAY

Traumatised survivors of the massive landslide estimated to have buried hundreds in Papua New Guinea have been slow to move to safer ground as the South Pacific island nation's authorities prepare to use heavy machinery to clear debris and risk triggering another landslide, officials said Thursday. Government and army geotechnical experts on Thursday were examining the stability of the massive swath of rubble that crushed Yambali village when a mountainside collapsed last week, Enga provincial administrator Sandis Tsaka said. Australian and New Zealand experts were expected to arrive on Friday. Two excavators and a bulldozer were ready to start digging on one side of the mass of debris more than 500 feet wide. *—AP*

Indian agent pleads guilty in Canada immigration case

OTTAWA, 30 MAY

An Indian immigration agent at the centre of a scam to cheat students from India by issuing fake college admission to procure Canadian visas has been sentenced to three years in jail after he pleaded guilty before a court in Vancouver to immigration offences, according to a media report. Brijesh Mishra, 37, was arrested after a Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) investigation tied him to dozens of fraudulent acceptance letters for Canadian colleges and universities that were provided to prospective international students from India between 2016 and 2020. Dressed in a red jumpsuit, Mishra on Wednesday stood inside a Vancouver courtroom and apologised for a slew of Canadian immigration offences. *—PTI*

Israel takes control of Gaza-Egypt border

Israel defence ministry claims half of Hamas fighters in Gaza have been eliminated

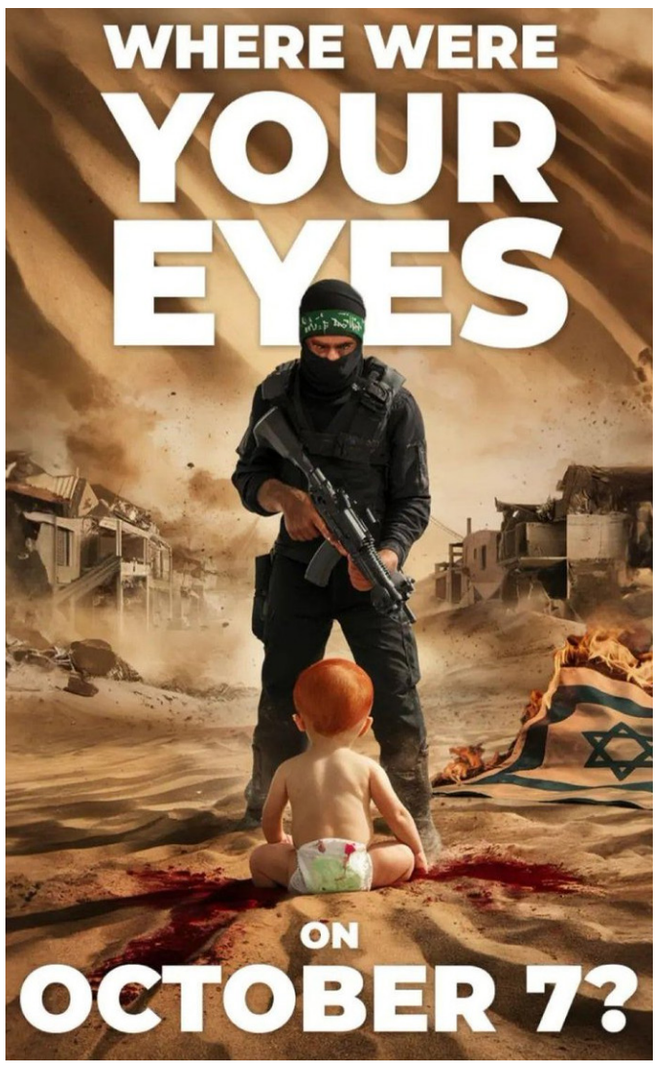
JERUSALEM, 30 MAY

Israel's military said Wednesday it seized control of a strategic corridor along Gaza's border with Egypt to cut off smuggling tunnels as it tries to destroy the militant Hamas group in a war now in its eighth month. The Israel Defence Ministry has also claimed that half of Hamas fighter in Gaza eliminated.

The capture of the Philadelphi Corridor could complicate Israel's relations with Egypt, which has complained about Israel's advance toward its border. Israel says the corridor is awash in tunnels that have funnelled weapons and other goods for Hamas — despite a yearslong blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt.

Israel also deepened its incursion into the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands have been seeking shelter from fighting, and where intensifying violence in recent days has killed dozens of Palestinians. The military said that a fifth brigade — up to several thousand soldiers — joined troops operating in the city on Tuesday.

Smuggling tunnels were dug under the Gaza-Egypt border to get around the Israeli-Egyptian blockade, imposed after Hamas took over. Some of the tunnels were large enough for vehicles. Hamas brought in weapons and supplies, and Gaza residents smuggled in commercial goods, from livestock to construction materials. *—AP*



After huge criticism worldwide, Israel has now retaliated by sharing its own image, 'Where were your eyes'questioning why people did not post about the Hamas attack on Israel 7 October on *PHOTO: X/@ISRAEL*

Arab summit: Xi pledges more Gaza aid

BEIJING, 30 MAY

Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated calls for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and promised more humanitarian aid for people in Gaza as he opened a summit with leaders of Arab states. "Since last October, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has escalated drastically, throwing people into tremendous suffering," Xi said in a speech opening the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. "War should not continue indefinitely." He restated China's backing of a two-state solution and pledged USD 69 million in humanitarian aid for Gaza. He also promised to donate USD 3 million to a United Nations agency that provides assistance to refugees. *—AP*

2 soldiers killed in a West Bank car-ramming attack

TEL AVIV, 30 MAY

The Israeli military said Thursday that two soldiers were killed in a car-ramming attack in the occupied West Bank.

The military said it received a report late Wednesday about the ramming near the Palestinian city of Nablus. The military said the attacker fled the scene and that soldiers had launched a search for him.

On Thursday, the military said the soldiers who were struck had died and that top military officials conducted an initial inquiry into the attack.

Israeli Army Radio reported that the attacker had turned himself in to Palestinian security forces, which could not immediately be confirmed.

Violence in the West Bank has surged throughout the war in Gaza. Israel has been conducting raids into Palestinian cities and towns in the territory to crack down on militancy and the incursions have led to the deaths of more than 500 Palestinians. Most of those killed have been in clashes with the military. But people throwing stones as well as others not involved in the confrontations have also been killed. *—PTI*

- The military said the soldiers who were struck had died and that top military officials conducted an initial inquiry into the attack. Israeli Army Radio reported that the attacker had turned himself in to Palestinian security forces, which could not immediately be confirmed

Sgt Diego Shvisha Harsaj and Sgt Eliya Hilel *PHOTO: X/@YOSEPHHADDAD*

Iran starts Prez poll process after Raisi's death

DUBAI, 30 MAY

Iran opened a five-day registration period Thursday for hopefuls wanting to run in the 28 June Presidential election to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash earlier this month with seven others.

The election comes as Iran grapples with the aftermath of the May 19 crash, as well as heightened tensions between Tehran and the United States, and protests including those over the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini that have swept the country. Presidents in the past have bent the Islamic Republic of Iran toward greater interaction or increased hostility with the West.

The five-day period will see those between the ages of 40 to 75 with at least a master's degree register as potential candidates. All candidates ultimately must be approved by Iran's 12-member Guardian Council, a panel of clerics and jurists ultimately overseen by Khamenei. That panel has never accepted a woman, for instance, nor anyone calling for radical change within the country's governance.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Raisi, a protege of Khamenei, won Iran's 2021 presidential election after the Guardian Council disqualified all of the candidates with the best chance to potentially challenge him. That vote saw the lowest turnout in Iran's history for a presidential election. That likely was a sign of voters' discontent with both a hard-line cleric sanctioned by the US in part over his involvement in mass executions in 1988, and Iran's Shiite theocracy over four decades after its 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Who will run — and potentially be accepted — remains in question. The country's acting president, Mohammad Mokhber, a previously behind-the-scenes bureaucrat, could be a front-runner, because he's already been seen meeting with Khamenei. *—AP*

WSJ REPORT REVEALS

Musk could become policy adviser if Trump wins

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

Former United States president Donald Trump is considering offering billionaire Elon Musk an advisory role in the White House if he is re-elected as the President after the 2024 election, as per a report in the Wall Street Journal.

According to the outlet, both billionaires have discussed a role that would allow the Tesla CEO to provide formal input and influence over border security and economic policies, areas on which he speaks widely on his social media platform X. Notably, Trump and Musk's tense relationship has improved as they speak on the phone "several times a month."

Musk and billionaire investor Nelson Peltz have also discussed an initiative with Trump to avoid voter fraud and to encourage elites not to support President Biden's re-election campaign.

Senior Trump adviser Brian Hughes told the New York Post, "Trump will be the only voice of what role an individual plays in his presidency. But it has been widely reported and is demonstrated in a number of ways, that many of the nation's most important leaders in technology and innovation are concerned with the damage done to their industry by Biden's failures to handle our economy and his moves to overburden innovators with government bureaucracy and unrelenting regulation."

In recent years, Musk has become vocal about political matters and has criticised several legislations, claiming that they are the product of the "woke mind virus." He has also been critical of the Biden administration's handling of border security, citing the record number of immigrants who have entered the United States illegally via the southern border in recent years.

Notably, Elon Musk met with Trump in March in Palm Beach, Florida, along with unnamed wealthy Republican donors, the New York Times said. Although the subject of the meeting remained unclear, it was stated that the meeting happened as Trump was looking for campaign contributors to run for the 2024 US Elections. *—The Wall Street Journal*

Elon Musk *PHOTO: X/@ELONMUSK*

Donald Trump *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

North Korea fires missile toward its eastern waters

SEOUL, 30 MAY

North Korea on Thursday fired a barrage of suspected ballistic missiles toward its eastern sea, according to South Korea's military, days after its attempt to launch a military reconnaissance satellite ended in failure but still drew strong condemnation from its rivals.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected the North firing around 10 projectiles that appeared to be short-range ballistic missiles from an area near its capital, Pyongyang. It said the suspected missiles flew around 350 kilometres before landing in waters off the North's eastern coast. It said the South Korean military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is closely sharing information with the United States and Japan.

Japan's coast guard issued a maritime safety advisory over the North Korean launches and urged ships to exercise caution if they find any fallen objects. Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters that the suspected missiles were believed to have landed in waters outside of Japan's exclusive economic zone and there were no immediate reports of damages. He said Tokyo "strongly condemns" the launches, which are in violation of UN Security Council resolutions against the North. *—AP*

PHOTO: PTI

MILITARY EXERCISE

Chinese and Cambodian military personnel participate in the Golden Dragon military exercise in Svay Chok village, Kampong Chhnang province, north of Phnom Penh Cambodia on Thursday *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

9 May riots: Pak acquits Imran in 2 cases

ISLAMABAD, 30 MAY

A court in Pakistan on Thursday acquitted jailed former prime minister Imran Khan in two cases related to 9 May violence, citing "insufficient evidence" against him.

The supporters of Khan, the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party, vandalised public property, including sensitive army installations last year following his arrest in an alleged corruption case.

The petition challenging the two cases lodged at Shehzad Town police station against the PTI founder was approved by Judicial Magistrate Umar Shabbir of the District and Sessions Court of Islamabad. While acquitting Khan, 71, the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, the court said in its verdict: "Because of insufficient evidence presented by the prosecution, PTI founder has been acquitted."

On 15 May, Khan was acquitted in two cases linked to the 9 May vandalism. *—PTI*

Imran Khan *PHOTO: PTI*

4 Pakistanis killed by Iranian border guards

QUETTA, 30 MAY

Iranian border guards opened fire at a vehicle carrying a group of Pakistanis, killing four people and wounding two others in a remote area in the southwest, Pakistani officials said Thursday. The incident happened near the border village of Mashkel in Baluchistan province on Wednesday, local police said.

Government administrator Sahibzada Asfand said it was unclear why the Iranian forces opened fire. Local police say the bodies of the four men had been handed over to their families. There was no immediate comment from Tehran or Pakistan's Foreign Ministry. Security forces on both sides often arrest smugglers and insurgents who operate in the region.

Pakistan in tit-for-tat strikes in January targeted alleged militant hideouts inside Iran, killing at least nine people in retaliation for a similar attack by Iran. *—AP*

BIGGEST NAT'L SECURITY CASE

Hong Kong court convicts 14 activists

HONG KONG, 30 MAY

A Hong Kong court on Thursday convicted 14 pro-democracy activists in the city's biggest national security case under a law imposed by Beijing that has all but wiped out public dissent.

Those found guilty of conspiracy to commit subversion included former lawmakers Leung Kwok-hung, Lam Cheuk-ting, Helena Wong and Raymond Chan, and they could face up to life in prison when sentenced later. The two defendants acquitted were former district councillors Lee Yue-shun and Lawrence Lau.

They were among 47 democracy advocates who were prosecuted in 2021 for their involvement in an unofficial primary election. Prosecutors had accused them of attempting to paralyze Hong Kong's government and topple the city's leader by securing the legislative majority necessary to indiscriminately veto budgets. In a summary of the verdict distributed to media, the court said the election participants had declared they would "either actively use or use the power conferred on the (Legislative Council) by the (Basic Law) to veto the budgets."

Under the Basic Law, the chief executive would be compelled to dissolve the legislature and eventually step down if major bills such as the budget were vetoed.

In the full, 319-page verdict, the court also said if the plan to veto bills would lead to the dissolution of the legislature, it meant "the implementation of any new government policies would be seriously hampered and essentially put to a halt."

"The power and authority of both the Government and the Chief Executive would be greatly undermined," the court said in the verdict. "In our view ... that would create a constitutional crisis for Hong Kong." The judges concluded that "unlawful means" are not limited only to criminal acts, and that it was not necessary for the prosecution to prove the accused knew that the means to be used were "unlawful." *—AP*

Those found guilty of conspiracy to commit subversion included former lawmakers could face up to life in prison *PHOTO: X/@TheTorontoSun*

Rupee rebounds to settle 9 paise higher at 83.31 against USD

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The rupee recovered 9 paise to settle at 83.31 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday on the back of softening American currency as well as crude oil prices in the overseas market. Forex traders said, however, a massive selling in the domestic equity markets, outflow of foreign fund and increased month-end demand of greenback by oil marketing companies weighed on the Indian currency. At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.42 and oscillated between the intra-day high of 83.26 and lowest level of 83.44 during the session. It finally settled at 83.31 (provisional), registering a gain of 9 paise from its previous closing level. The rupee plunged 22 paise to close at 83.40 against the US dollar on Wednesday, a day after losing 5 paise on Tuesday. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.12 per cent lower at 104.90. *—PTI*

Gold tumbles ₹350, silver retreat from record levels

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Gold prices declined Rs 350 to Rs 72,850 per 10 grams while silver prices retreated from record highs in the national capital amid weak trends in the global markets on Thursday. According to HDFC Securities, silver prices tumbled Rs 1,100 to Rs 96,000 per kg. It had closed at Rs 97,100 per kg on Wednesday. Gold prices fell Rs 350 to Rs 72,850 per 10 grams. In the previous session, it had settled at Rs 73,200 per 10 grams. "Gold declined on Thursday as investors assessed the recent hawkish comments from Fed officials on US interest rates. Aggressive remarks have dampened expectations for a potential Fed pivot. "The recovery in US Treasury yields, which reached a four-week high in the previous session, also had a negative impact on precious metals prices," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities. *—PTI*

SW Steel launches indigenous coated steel

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

JSW Steel has come up with an indigenous product Magsure, which is a Zinc-Magnesium-Aluminium alloy coated steel. This special kind of steel has significant usage in applications in high corrosive environments. Such steel finds its usage across several applications like steel structures in solar installations, silos, guard rails, AC parts, requiring higher level of protection against corrosion. JSW Steel, India's leading steel company is part of the USD 24 billion JSW Group. Since 2020, the Indian market for Zinc-Magnesium-Aluminium alloy coated steel has grown more than 6x from approximately 15,000 tonnes to approximately 120,000 tonne in 2023-24.*—ANI*

Libas looking at ₹1,000 revenue by FY26

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Women clothing brand Libas, which on Thursday announced securing Rs 150 crore funding, aims to double its sales in the next two years to Rs 1,000 crore, said its Founder and CEO Siddhant Keshwani. Zivore Apparel, the company which owns the brand Libas, on Thursday, announced the closing of its first external funding round, with an investment of Rs 150 crore by IAF Series 5, a fund managed by ICICI Venture. Infusion of this fresh capital is expected to help build an omnichannel presence for Libas with strengthening of its current digital presence and accelerate offline expansion. The fast fashion ethnic wear brand, which started its journey as a D2C brand in 2014, has adopted an omnichannel strategy and is targeting to have a network of 150 physical stores in the next 3-5 years. *—PTI*

RBI balance sheet rises 11% to ₹70.47L cr

It is the highest-ever dividend payout to the govt

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The size of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) balance sheet increased by 11.08 per cent to Rs 70.47 lakh crore as on March 2024, leading to the highest-ever dividend payout to the government, according to the central bank's annual report.

In actual terms, the increase was Rs 7,02,946.97 crore over Rs 63.45 lakh crore as on March 2023.

The central bank's net income stood at Rs 2.11 lakh crore at end-March 2024 after making a provision of Rs 42,819.91 crore, significantly down from Rs 1,30,875.75 crore in the preceding fiscal. The amount made towards provisioning is transferred to Contingency Fund.

The net income during 2022-23 was Rs 87,420 crore.

The balance sheet of RBI reflects activities carried out in pursuance of its various functions including issuance of currency as well as monetary policy and reserve management objectives.

Last week, the RBI had approved the highest-ever dividend payout of Rs 2.11 lakh crore to the central government for 2023-24. The dividend or surplus transfer by the RBI to the Centre was Rs 87,416 crore for the fiscal 2022-23. The previous high was Rs 1.76 lakh crore in 2018-19.

According to the RBI's Annual Report for 2023-24, the increase on assets side in the balance sheet was due to rise in foreign investments, gold, and loans and advances by 13.90 per cent, 18.26 per cent and 30.05 per cent, respectively.

PHOTO: PTI

On liabilities side, expansion was due to increase in notes issued, deposits and other liabilities by 3.88 per cent, 27.00 per cent and 92.57 per cent, respectively. Indian economy is likely to grow at 7 per cent in the current fiscal year starting April, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its annual report released on Thursday.

The Indian economy, it said, expanded at a robust pace in 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024 financial year), with real GDP growth accelerating to 7.6 per cent from 7.0 per cent in the previous year – the third successive year of 7 per cent or above growth.

—PTI

MSPs for kharif and rabi crops ensured minimum return of 50%

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The minimum support prices (MSPs) for both kharif and rabi seasons 2023-24 ensured a minimum return of 50 per cent over the cost of production for all crops, said the Reserve Bank's Annual Report released on Thursday. The overall public stock of foodgrains as on 31 March, 2024 stood at 2.9 times the total quarterly buffer norm, the report said. On 29 November, 2023, the government extended the scheme of free distribution of foodgrains under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for five more years, effective from 1 January, 2024. *—PTI*

UNCLAIMED DEPOSITS WITH BANKS RISE 26%

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

Unclaimed deposits with banks have witnessed a 26 per cent jump year on year to Rs 78,213 crore at the end of March 2024, as per the RBI Annual Report released on Thursday.

The amount with the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund stood at Rs 62,225 crore at the end of March 2023.

Banks including cooperative banks transfer unclaimed deposits of account holders lying in their accounts for 10 or more years to RBI's Depositor Education and Awareness (DEA) Fund.

As a measure to assist the account holders and with a view to consolidating and rationalising the extant instructions on inoperative accounts, the Reserve Bank issued a comprehensive guidelines earlier this year on the measures to be put in place by the banks covering various aspects of classifying accounts and deposits as inoperative accounts and unclaimed deposits, as the case may be.

The RBI advised banks for a periodic review of such accounts, measures to prevent fraud in such accounts, grievance redress mechanism for expeditious resolution of complaints, steps to be taken for tracing the customers of inoperative accounts or unclaimed deposits including their nominees or legal heirs for re-activation of accounts, settlement of claims or closure and the process to be followed by them.

—PTI

NIFTY FALLS 216.05 PTS

Mkt falls for 5th day; Sensex plunges 617 pts

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty declined nearly 1 per cent on Thursday, continuing their falling streak for the fifth day running due to profit booking amid monthly expiry in the derivatives segment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex plunged by 617.30 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 73,885.60. The barometer hit the day's low of 73,668.73 due to selling in blue-chips.

The NSE Nifty dropped by 216.05 points or 0.95 per cent to close at 22,488.65.

Benchmark indices closed at lifetime high levels on May 23 which triggered profit-taking amid growing nervousness among investors ahead of the results of the Lok Sabha polls on June 4. Since then, Nifty and Sensex have declined around 2 per cent in the five straight sessions.

"The benchmark index is taking cues from the US market as treasury yields continue to climb following the stickiness of global inflation, delaying the central bank's interest rates cut policy," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Titan, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Nestle India, Tata Motors and JSW Steel were the biggest laggards.

ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the gainers.

"Meanwhile, the broader market continued the weak trend, led by profit booking, due to feeble closing of monthly expiry owing to lack of interest to hold short-term positions, as exit poll is slated in the weekend," Nair said.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai settled lower.

European markets were trading with gains, while US markets ended in the negative territory on Wednesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,841.84 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent Crude fell 0.41 per cent to USD 83.19 a barrel. *—PTI*

SEBI cuts approval time for online trading

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

Markets regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Thursday significantly reduced the time taken by stock exchanges for granting approval to stock brokers for internet-based trading to seven days from the current 30 days.

The move is aimed at facilitating ease of doing business.

Under the rule, the broker is required to apply to the respective stock exchange for a formal permission to provide internet-based trading service.

Further, the stock exchange, which was required to communicate its decision to the member within 30 calendar days, will now have to do so within 7 days, SEBI said in its circular.

The internet trading can take place through order routing systems, which will route client orders to exchange trading systems for execution. Thus a client sitting in any part of the country can trade using the internet as a medium through brokers' internet trading systems. Additionally, the regulator has abolished the existing requirement of periodic confirmation of internet-based trading (IBT) statistics by stock brokers before they are published by stock exchanges. *—PTI*

Awfis Space Solutions lists at over 13% premium

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

Shares of working space operator Awfis Space Solutions got listed on Thursday, with a premium of over 13 per cent against the issue price of Rs 383, even as the overall market sentiment continued to be cautious. The stock began the trade at Rs 435, up 13.58 per cent from the issue price on the NSE. It later climbed 15.68 per cent to Rs 447.80.

On the BSE, it listed at Rs 432.25, reflecting a jump of 12.86 per cent.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 3,108.61 crore on the NSE. *—PTI*

The stock climbed 4.99 per cent each to Rs 377.40 and 377.50 PHOTO: X / @PAYTM

Paytm stock jumps 5%; hits upper circuit for 2nd straight day

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Shares of One97 Communications, which owns the brand Paytm, on Thursday jumped 5 per cent to hit its upper circuit limit for the second straight session amid reports of Adani and Paytm were in talks to acquire a stake in the fintech company.

However, One97 Communications Ltd on Wednesday said it is not in talks to sell a stake to the Adani Group, while the Gujarat-based conglomerate has also termed such reports as "false and untrue."

The stock climbed 4.99 per cent each to Rs 377.40 and 377.50 -- its upper circuit limit -- on the NSE and BSE, respectively. Since shutting its banking unit after falling foul to regulations, Paytm has lost about half of its market value. In February, it was reported to be in talks with billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Jio Financial Services but both entities had denied the same.

Paytm recently reported a widening of loss in the fourth quarter of the financial year 2023-24 to Rs 550 crore, following the ban imposed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on transactions related to its payments bank.

RBI barred Paytm Payments Bank Limited from accepting deposits, credit transactions or top-ups in any customer accounts, wallets, and FASTags, keeping in view the interest of customers, including merchants from 15 March onwards

—PTI

PHONEPE LAUNCHES LENDING PRODUCTS IN 6 CATEGORIES

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Homegrown fintech firm PhonePe on Thursday said it has launched secured lending products across six categories on its platform.

PhonePe users can avail mutual fund loan, gold loan, bike loan, car loan, home loan/loan against property and education loan, according to a company statement.

The firm has partnered with banks, Non-banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) and fintech firms such as Tata Capital, L&T Finance, Hero FinCorp, Muthoot Fincorp, DMI Housing Finance, Home First Finance, RuPay, Volt Money, and Gradright, the statement said.

PhonePe, currently having 15 partners, said it aims to scale to 25 by the next quarter.

"Lenders are investing heavily in digitising the secured loan journeys and customers are adapting to the digitisation at a rapid pace. We believe it's a great time to revolutionise the secured lending product experience for the customers working with the lending ecosystem," Hemant Gala, CEO, PhonePe Lending, said. *—PTI*

POWER DEMAND HITS ALL-TIME HIGH

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

India's peak power demand hit a record high of 246.06 GW per day after mercury touched highest-ever levels in Delhi and other places, prompting use of air-conditioners and other electricity-consuming cooling devices, the power ministry said on Thursday.

The peak power demand met, or the highest supply in the day, was recorded at 246.06 GW on Wednesday, which is the maximum so far in the summer season this year, according to the power ministry data.

The previous peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

The ongoing summer season's previous highest demand of 239.96 GW was recorded on 24 May this year. *—PTI*

IND-RA UPGRADES ADANI GREEN'S RATING

AHMEDABAD, 30 MAY

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has upgraded Adani Green Energy Limited's (AGEL) Long-Term Issuer Rating from 'IND A+' to 'IND AA-'. The outlook is stable, reflecting the company's robust operational performance, improved leverage metrics, and strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing its financial stability and growth prospects.

The rating also factors in healthy counterparty diversification and a reduction in receivables, leading to better cash flow from operations.

The long-term issuer rating was upgraded to 'IND AA-', and both fund-based and non-fund-based limits saw similar upgrades. *—ANI*

UP BY 23.2% IN 2024

More women taking leadership roles

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The percentage of women in senior leadership roles increased from 16.6 per cent in 2016 to 18.7 per cent in 2023 PHOTO: PTI

Hiring of women for leadership roles has increased to 23.2 per cent across sectors in early 2024 even though employers are yet to achieve gender parity in top management, a report said on Thursday.

Women leadership hires have shown significant growth over the years to 23.2 per cent in early 2024, increasing from 18.8 per cent in 2016 to peaking at 25.2 per cent in 2021, according to a joint report by professional networking platform LinkedIn and public policy consulting firm the Quantum Hub - 'Women in Leadership in Corporate India'.

The report has utilised insights from LinkedIn's Economic Graph data, based on self-reported data available on the LinkedIn platform from across sectors.

LinkedIn economic graph data showed that there has been an overall increase in women employees across the workforce, rising from 23.9 per cent in 2016 to 26.8 per cent in 2024.

The percentage of women in senior leadership roles increased from 16.6 per cent in 2016 to 18.7 per cent in 2023, but it has dipped slightly to 18.3 per cent in 2024, which might correct by the end of the year.

"LinkedIn Economic Graph data shows that despite progress, women still face obstacles in reaching leadership roles due to bias, societal norms, and structural barriers. However, recent focus on 'women-led development' has led to concerted efforts by both policymakers and business leaders to tackle these challenges," LinkedIn India Board Member, Country Head: Legal and Government Affairs, Aditi Jha added. *—PTI*

- LinkedIn economic graph data showed that there has been an overall increase in women employees across the workforce, rising from 23.9 per cent in 2016 to 26.8 per cent in 2024

FDI inflows fall 3% to USD 44 billion in FY24

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

Foreign direct investment (FDI) equity inflows in India declined 3.49 per cent to USD 44.42 billion in 2023-24 due to lower infusion in sectors such as services, computer hardware and software, telecom, auto and pharma, according to the government data.

FDI inflows stood at USD 46.03 billion during 2022-23.

Inflows during January-March FY24 , however, rose by 33.4 per cent to USD 12.38 billion as against USD 9.28 billion in the year-ago period.

The total FDI -- which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital -- declined marginally by one per cent to USD 70.95 billion during 2023-24 as against USD 71.35 billion in 2022-23, data from Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) showed.

In 2021-22, the country received the highest ever FDI inflows of USD 84.83 billion.

During the last fiscal, FDI equity inflows decreased from major countries, including Mauritius, Singapore, the US, the UK, UAE, Cayman Islands, Germany, and Cyprus.

Sectorally, inflows contracted in services, computer software and hardware, trading, telecommunication, automobile, pharma and chemicals. *—PTI*

NORWAY CHESS

Pragg claims maiden classical win over Carlsen

Vaishali maintained her sole lead after getting past Anna

STAVANGER, 30 MAY

Indian GM R Praggnanandhaa *PHOTO: X / @RPRAGGNACHESS*

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa crushed world number one Magnus Carlsen for the first time in Classical format to emerge as the sole leader in the Norway chess tournament here.

Having beaten him a few times in online and faster versions of the game and after losing to him in the finale of the last World Cup, Praggnanandhaa finally got past the home favorite in what would be known as a clear classical triumph.

Following the third-round win, the 18-year-old Indian now leads the men's section with 5.5 points in all, half a point clear of USA's Fabiano Caruana who scored his first victory in classical against reigning world champion Ding Liren of China.

Carlsen, on three points, looks like a distant third for now in the updated standings but with each classical win worth three points, this might not hold for too long.

Praggnanandhaa's elder sister R Vaishali maintained her sole lead after getting past Anna Muzychuk of Norway in the Armageddon game after drawing the Classical. Vaishali ensured that her lead remained intact after a draw in Armageddon as black against Muzychuk.

—PTI

Djokovic, Mwedvedev and Zverev reach 3rd round

STAVANGER, 29 MAY

Men's singles number one seed Novak Djokovic has booked his berth in the third round of the 2024 French Open on Thursday.

The Serbian tennis legend humbled Roberto Carballes Baena in straight sets. Djokovic won the contest 6-4, 6-1, 6-2.

Djokovic, who is chasing his 25th Grand Slam title, was on top of his game. He is 16 matches unbeaten at Roland Garros.

With this result against Baena, Djokovic has raced to a 368-49 win-loss record at Grand Slams. He is one win from equalling the all-time record of Roger Federer (369 wins).

Djokovic, who has won three Roland Garros titles, has extended his win-loss tally here to 94-16.

Novak Djokovic *PHOTO: X/@ROLANDGARROS*

Medvedev moves into 3rd round after Kecmanovic retires injured

Daniil Medvedev advanced to the French Open third round after Miomir Kecmanovic was forced to retire injured in their round-two clash at Roland-Garros

The former US Open champion prevailed in just 55 minutes at 6-1, 5-0 ahead on Court Suzanne-Lenglen, when his opponent was unable to continue. Medvedev has never progressed beyond the quarter-finals of the clay-court major, reaching the last eight in 2021, but has plenty of energy still in reserve after his premature win.

Rybakina sees off Rus to move into third round, Sabalenka eases past Uchijima

Fourth seed Elena Rybakina made a sluggish start before beating Dutchwoman Arantxa Rus 6-3 6-4 on Thursday to move into the third round of the French Open.Rybakina, a former Wimbledon champion, made an early double fault but held in the opening game under the roof on Court Suzanne Lenglen.The 24-year-old Kazakh seized control, firing three consecutive aces from 15-30 down for a 3-2 lead and sealed a break to take the opening set in 35 minutes."With a lefty, I'm trying to cover the right sides of the court.

Alexander Zverev sees off Belgium's David Goffin

World number four Alexander Zverev advanced to the French Open third round with a commanding 7-6 (4) 6-2 6-2 victory over experienced Belgian David Goffin on Thursday.

The German, who had previously ousted 14-time champion Rafael Nadal in the opening round, faced a tough challenge in the first-set tiebreak but ultimately prevailed. Zverev then broke early in the second set, gaining momentum. Former quarter-finalist Goffin came close to breaking Zverev's serve in the fourth game.

—AP

PHOTO: PTI

Wearing an India jersey is a different feeling: Pant

NEW YORK, 30 MAY

It would be 527 days since his life-threatening accident when Rishabh Pant dons the India jersey on June 5 at the Nassau County ground for the opening T20 World Cup match against Ireland and he can't wait for it. On 23 March this year, Pant wore the blue of Delhi Capitals while making an emotional comeback after the horrific car crash in 2022 but he is more eager to wear a different shade of blue the 'India Blue' to be specific. "Getting back on the field with an Indian jersey on is a different feeling altogether.

—AP

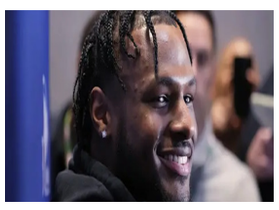


PHOTO: PTI

Bronny James is staying in the NBA draft

CALIFORNIA, 30 MAY

Bronny James is keeping his name in the NBA draft, with the hopes of joining his father in the league next season. "He's a really good prospect who has a lot of room for growth," Rich Paul, the CEO of Klutch Sports Group, told ESPN, which first reported the decision. Paul later confirmed the decision to The Associated Press. LeBron James, Bronny's father and the NBA's all-time scoring leader, posted his reaction on his social media accounts, including one Instagram story that had the simple caption: "BRONNY STAYING IN DRAFT!"*—AP*

PHOTO: @CHETRI_SUNIL11

MLS: Inter Miami's 10-match unbeaten run ends with 3-1

FORT LAUDERDALE , 30 MAY

Lionel Messi scored yet again. It was the lone real highlight for Inter Miami, as its 10-match Major League Soccer winning streak was ended by an Atlanta United side that got its first league win in nearly two months. Saba Lobjanidze scored once in each half, Jamal Thiaré helped put the game away with a goal in the 73rd minute and Atlanta United snapped a nine-match MLS winless streak with a 3-1 victory on Wednesday night. Atlanta United was 0-5-4 in MLS play since beating Chicago 3-0 on 31 March.

—AP

Treesa-Gayatri upset World No. 2 Baek-Lee

SINGAPORE, 30 MAY

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand *PHOTO: X / @INDIA_ALLSPORTS*

PV Sindhu suffered yet another setback against Carolina Marin, but the rising Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand stunned world number two Baek Ha Na and Lee So Hee of South Korea to enter the quarterfinals at Singapore Open here on Thursday.

Double Olympic medallist Sindhu blew away an 18-15 lead in the decider to go down to familiar rival Marin in a thrilling 21-13 11-21 20-22 women's singles last-16 match. It was Sindhu's sixth loss on the trot against her arch-rival in 2018. But the Commonwealth Games bronze medallist duo of Treesa and Gayatri kept the Indian flag flying by eliminating Baek and Lee 21-9 14-21 21-15 in close a one-hour battle. This was the world number 30 Indian duo's maiden win from three meetings against the world number two Korean pair. They will be up against another South Korean pair sixth seed Kim So Yeong and Kong Hee Yong in the quarterfinal of the BWF World Tour Super 750 event.

The Indian duo had lost to the Korean pair at the Hangzhou Asian Games pre-quarterfinals last year. The Baek-Lee duo was error-prone as Treesa and Gayatri held a commanding 18-9 lead before taking the opening game without much fuss.

PV Sindhu *PHOTO: PTI*

—PTI

Ponting picks IPL top performers

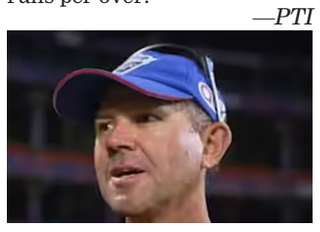
DUBAI, 30 MAY

FormerAustralia captain Ricky Ponting has picked Indian Premier League (IPL) topperformers Jasprit Bumrah and Travis Head to excel among the bowlers andbatters respectively in the T20 World Cup starting 2 June.

India's pace spearhead Bumrahstood tall among the bowlers with 20 wickets in 13 matches for Mumbai Indiansdespite the five-time winners enduring their worst-ever campaign in 17 editionsof the IPL, while Australian Head struck 567 runs in 15 matches.

Despite MI's all-around-struggles, Bumrah shone brightly with his supreme control of the ball,maintaining an envious economy rate of a mere 6.48 in a tournament wherein eachof the top 10 bowlers went for at least eight runs per over.

—PTI



Ricky Ponting *PHOTO: PTI*

Junior hockey: Men secure shootout win over Germany

BREDA, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

India concluded their junior hockey teams' tour of Europe with a gritty shootout win over Germany by the men's side, while the women were held to a 2-2 draw by Orange Rood club here.

The men's team won 3-1 on penalties after a 1-1 stalemate in regulation time in their match at the Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push here on Wednesday.

Gurjot Singh, Dilraj Singh, and Manmeet Singh scored one each in the shoot-out after Mukesh Toppo struck off a rebound from a penalty corner in the 33rd minute.

The Indian Colts held their lead in regulation time until Germany equalized four minutes into the fourth quarter, adding excitement to the game.

Despite both teams' efforts to take the lead, the score remained unchanged, leading to a penalty shootout.

This was the men's team's second win from five matches of the tour, having beaten Belgium 4-2 (2-2) on penalties in their opening game at Antwerp on May 20.

They also suffered three losses -- against Belgium (2-3), Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push (4-5) and Germany (2-3).

The women's team registered two wins, two losses, and a solitary draw against Orange Rood on Wednesday.

They played a quiet first quarter against Oranje Rood and Sanjana Horo (18') broke the deadlock for India.

Oranje Rood responded well, earning two penalty corners but the Indian defence held firm, ending the first half 1-0.

—PTI

INDIAN WOMEN'S TEAM CONFIDENT ON EVE OF UZBEKISTAN TEST

women's football team *PHOTO: PTI*

TASHKENT, 30 MAY

The Indian women's football team will need to up its game to improve its poor record against higher-ranked Uzbekistan in an international friendly here on Friday.

India and Uzbekistan, ranked 66th and 48th, respectively, in the current FIFA chart, have faced each other 11 times previously. India could manage victory only once, a massive 6-0 win during the 2003 AFC Asia Cup.

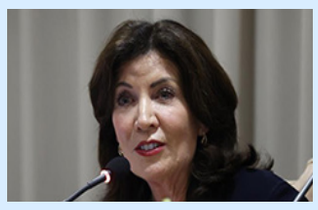
The most recent clash between the two sides happened during the AFC Olympic Qualifiers Round 2 last November when India suffered a 0-3 defeat.

—PTI

NY promises unprecedented security for India-Pak clash following terror threat

NEW YORK, 30 MAY

New York's Nassau County will have unprecedented security arrangements in place for the T20 World Cup clash between India and Pakistan on 9 June due to the threat of a terror attack here even though state Governor Kathy Hochul insisted that it is not credible "at this time." The Eisenhower Park Stadium at Nassau County will host eight matches of the tournament proper, including India's three outings. The Indians will also play a practice game against Bangladesh here on 1 June. New York State Governor Kathy Hochul said she has directed state police to elevate security measures to ensure the safety of the crowds. "In preparation for the World Cup, my team has been working with federal & local law enforcement to keep attendees safe. While there is no credible threat at this time, I've directed @nyspolice (NYPD) to elevate security measures & we'll continue to monitor as the event nears," Hochul said in a post on X. A report on CNN said that New York officials are putting safety precautions in place "after terror group ISIS-K made a global threat earlier this year" against the World Cup. Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said on Wednesday that the event received an ISIS-K-linked threat in April. "That was followed by more specific threats on India versus Pakistan game, scheduled for 9 June, and references to a viral video circulating online, which calls for 'that lone wolf to act out'," the report said.



Governor Kathy Hochul *PHOTO: X / @GOVKATHYHOCHUL*

—PTI

Sachin and Sanjeet win in Boxing World qualifiers

BANGKOK, 30 MAY

Sachin and Sanjeet *PHOTO: PTI*

India's Sachin Siwach (57kg) and Sanjeet Kumar (92kg) advanced another step towards Paris Olympic qualification as they registered convincing victories over their respective opponents to advance to the next round of the Boxing World Qualifiers here on Thursday.

Sachin started the proceedings for India with a clinical 5-0 win against Olympian Batuhan Ciftci of Turkey in the pre-quarterfinal round and Sanjeet then saw off the challenge from Luis Sanchez of Venezuela with an identical margin in the round of 32.

In the 57kg category, only three boxers will cut the Paris Olympics. Sachin, therefore, needs to win two more bouts to cut while Sanjeet, who got a bye in the round of 64, will have a similar target as all four semi-finalists will qualify in his weight category.

—PTI

LEGENDS OF T20 WORLD CUP

Leading run-getters and batters with best strike rates

NEW YORK, 30 MAY

With cricket's slam-bang version set for its ninth World Cup, PTI gives a rundown on the leading run-getters and the ones with the best strike rates in the T20 showpiece.

Leading run-getters

***Virat Kohli: 1141 runs**

Who else at No. 1 but the King himself? The talismanic Indian batter has been an absolute beast in the marquee event, scoring over a thousand runs across five editions. His ability to thrive under pressure and deliver match-winning performances has cemented his reputation as one of the finest batters in T20 cricket.

He holds the record for most runs in a single edition of the tournament -- 319 in 2014. He was also sensational in the 2016 edition, scoring 296 runs.

***Mahela Jayawardene: 1016 runs**

The now-retired Jayawardene's performances in T20 World Cups have been instrumental in former champions Sri Lanka's success in the tournament. He was a consistent scorer across the five editions he played.

***Chris Gayle: (965 runs)**

One of the most prolific and entertaining hitters in cricket history, Gayle is widely regarded as one of the most destructive batters, particularly in T20s. No longer competing for the West Indies, his performances in T20 World Cups have been nothing short of spectacular, making him a fan favorite and an important player for the West Indies when they won their maiden title in 2012.

***Rohit Sharma: (963 runs)**

The current India skipper has been a key player for his team in the T20 World Cups, especially after taking on the opening position. His ability to score big runs and provide stability at the top of the order has been crucial for India's success in the tournament.

He has played all editions, scoring 963 runs, including 91 fours at a strike rate of 127.88.

***Tillakaratne Dilshan: (897 runs)**

The leading run-scorer in the 2009 edition with 317 runs from seven matches, the retired Dilshan, with his aggressive batting style and ability to provide quick starts at the top of the order, was a vital cog in the Sri Lankan team's lineup across six editions.

Highest strike rates

***Jos Buttler: (144.48)**

Regarded as one of the most dynamic and destructive batters, Buttler's greatest strength lies in his ability to score rapidly and that is why he has the best strike rate in the T20 World Cup history that fetched him 799 runs in 27 matches.

***AB de Villiers: (143.40)**

The now-retired South African has had an outstanding strike rate in T20 World Cups. His ability to score quickly and decisively made him one of the most feared batters. De Villiers collected 717 runs in 29 innings with the help of 51 fours and 30 sixes.

***Chris Gayle: (142.75)**

Gayle's unparalleled level of fearlessness and confidence helped him to an amazing 142.75 strike rate in the T20 World Cups. The Jamaican always backed himself to take on any bowler. Gayle is the only player to have scored two centuries in the event, both of which were match-winning efforts.

***Mahela Jayawardene: (134.74)**

Jayawardene had an impressive average of 39.07 and a strike rate of 134.74, a fine reflection of his ability to score quickly while maintaining consistency.

***David Warner: (133.22)**

Warner's aggressive approach will once again be crucial for Australia. His ability to score runs quickly and efficiently has made him one of the most exciting and effective batters in T20 World Cups.

—PTI